

LONDON READER

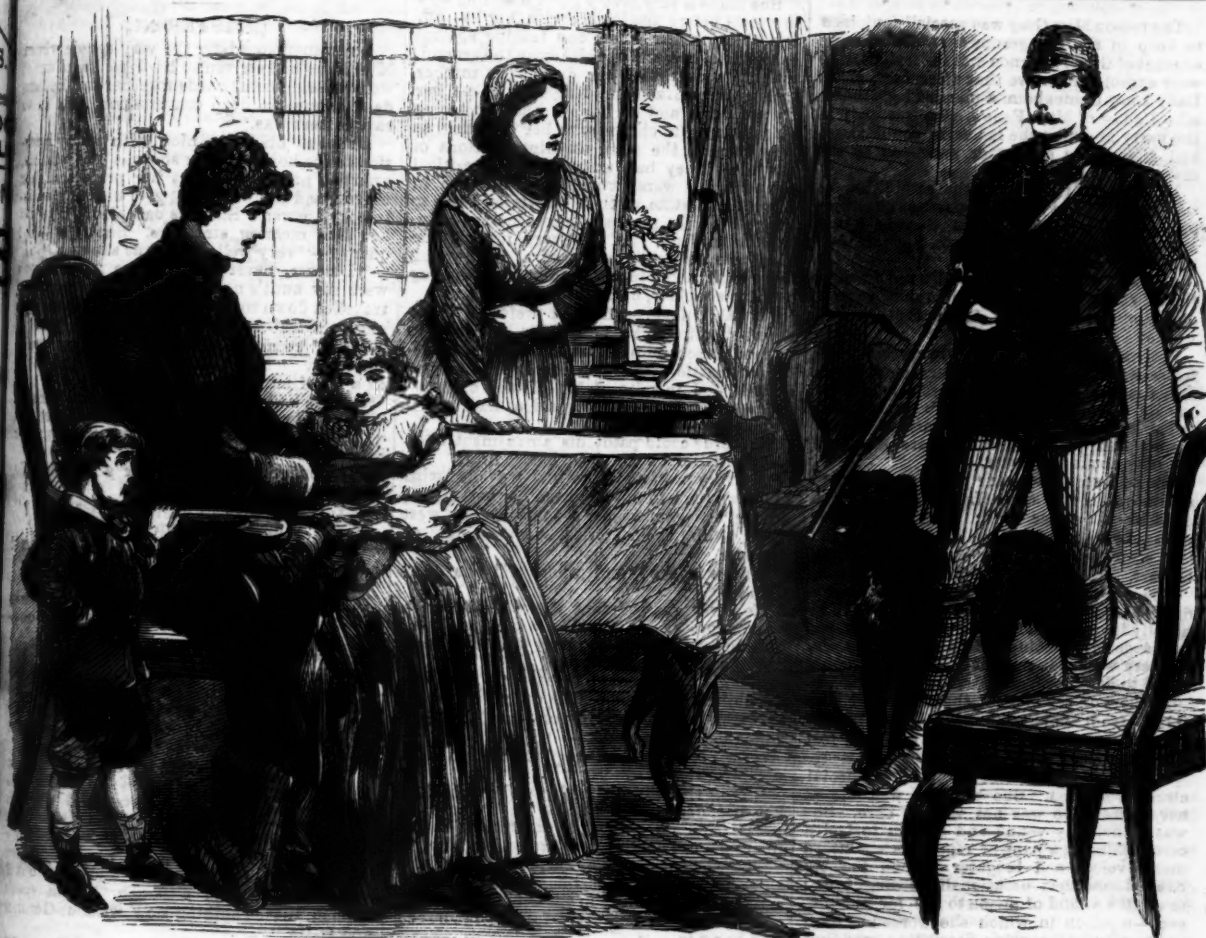
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE DOOR WAS SOFTLY OPENED, AND A YOUNG MAN, WITH A GUN IN HIS HAND, CAME INTO THE HOUSE.]

TWO MARRIAGES.

CHAPTER X.

MISS FANE had not much opportunity of carrying her kind intentions with regard to Georgie into execution, for that young lady prudently avoided her as much as possible, and, with the exception of appearing at breakfast time and at lunch, never was visible. On these occasions the presence of the servants, including the footman with the red hands, was a sort of protection from the attacks of Miss Fane's temper, her sharp sarcastic tongue. Still not a few secretly aimed cuts were delivered, and went home as painfully as she could have desired.

Hints and innuendos about girls, instead of going into shops or service or as nursery governesses, worming their way into the families of solitary, rich, old ladies, with a view of getting into society and of having a good share of their employer's money; often doing relations out of their own, and carrying off besides jewels, lace, and priceless family heir-

looms. "I hate such parasites!" she concluded, warmly, looking full at Miss Grey, so as to give special point to her remarks; but Miss Grey kept her eyes upon her plate and was silent, fully resolved neither to put on a cap which did not fit, nor to pick up the proffered gauntlet in defence of her class.

Her silence provoked and enraged Miss Fane more than any reply. Silence can be both scornful and irritating, and she redoubled her attack.

Georgie sincerely dreaded these encounters twice a day, where she sat a silent scapegoat, and Lady Maxwell a frightened listener; for of course all remarks were addressed in a general way to her, and the men-servants stood round in respectful attention, but below stairs wondered "Miss Grey could stand Miss Fane's goings on. Anyone could see what she was a driving at, and she made out as all companions was a bad set, looking for money and dead men's shoes, and that most of 'em was downright thieves!"

There were gay doings—dinners, evening parties—now, and Georgie had a great deal to do. Though she never appeared she was

nearly run off her legs, helping here and helping there, dusting old china and washing old glass too valuable to be trusted to servants, arranging flowers and fruit, writing menus, writing notes.

One day in the middle of the preparation for the first dinner she was very busy blanching almonds for the housekeeper, and was thus occupied in her harbour of refuge—the housekeeper's room—when, to her amazement, Miss Fane entered, looking both cold and peevish. They were alone; and Georgie instinctively felt that she was come to say something specially disagreeable.

"Oh, Miss Grey—busy, I see! Ah, I want to have a word with you alone. My aunt is afraid you will be offended, but I am sure you have too much sense. Now that her house will be full of guests she would prefer that you did not appear at all. You see you are not, excuse me, accustomed to good society, and you would feel quite out of it, and your place as companion is efficiently taken by me."

"Did—does—Lady Maxwell mean that she wishes me to leave?" stammered Georgie, pushing away a plate of almonds as she spoke.

"I think myself that it would be much better if you did," returned Miss Fane, with great candour. "I really think she does not require you at all. She has plenty of society, and she can always have me; but she did not formally say so. You are merely to keep in the background completely and to make yourself useful." The entrance of the house-keeper, with a flushed face and an immense candelabra carefully carried in her hands, put an end to this agreeable interview.

The reason Miss Grey was specially enjoined to keep in the background was, of course, on account of Gilbert Vernon and his friends, who were expected to arrive that afternoon; also a Lady Lucy Cunningham, a married fashionable schoolfellow of Miss Fane's, who was to join the party and keep the ladies in countenance and from being altogether swamped by the masculine element.

For a whole three days the establishment was in a whirl of luncheon-parties, shooting-parties, dinner-parties; and George found ample employment in her allotted sphere, i.e., behind the scenes.

Her very existence was totally unknown to the new arrivals, but she had had several opportunities of seeing them through the windows of the order room.

She had not been surprised to recognise her fellow-traveller in Gilbert Vernon, for the fact that he and her princess's hair were one and the same person had been revealed to her long ere this by his numerous photographs and pictures, which were scattered liberally about the house.

She had seen a walking party on a Sunday afternoon. First came Lady Lucy, with a cavalier at either side; then one rather melancholy individual walking alone; then last, a long way back, the cousins Edna and Gilbert.

She was talking with much vivacity and a display of animation that was surprising in so usually languid a lady. He was listening, but not eagerly listening; his attitude, his air, his very walk was that of one who was being bored to death.

Lookers-on see most of the game, and Miss Grey, from her retirement in the upper window, did not fail to notice this, and feel a thrill of satisfaction at the sight.

She was not fated ever to adorn the social circle, it seemed. She was not welcome at her aunt's; she was not wanted here. She was sufficiently young and human to feel a certain kind of pang of regret as she heard merry voices and laughter beyond the big bay doors that occasionally swung back; that were a kind of prison to her for the present—a prison in which she worked as hard as any servant arranging, decorating, mending, making, &c.

One afternoon, after a long day's work, helping the housekeeper, she thought she would venture out for a short walk before dark, as her head ached so badly. She pined for fresh air.

It would be quite safe, the coast was clear; the whole party had driven off to lunch, nearly ten miles away, and would not return before dinner.

It was a bitterly cold, grey-looking afternoon; the winds were nipping; and, extravagant as it seems, she put on her sealakin, for nothing else would keep out the temperature, and thus protected set forth.

She had no special object in view at first; but after a time, as she found herself in the neighbourhood of the West Lodge, she thought that she would look in and ask for the under-keeper's child, who had broken its arm the previous week.

She met with a hearty welcome. It was not her first visit, and on a former occasion she had been betrayed into relating the story of "Pass in Boots," and the young Grahams had an affectionate recollection of Miss Grey.

She had hardly had time to take a proffered seat to inquire after the invalid and the baby

when she was surrounded by a clamorous crowd, demanding "Pass in Boots."

Vain were her excuses and their mother's apologies and expostulations—"Pass in Boots" alone would silence them.

At last she fairly gave in. It was a very novel and pleasant sensation to be wanted somewhere, and to find eager faces welcoming her and pressing anxiously round her. So this time she began "Jack and the Beanstalk" by way of a change.

She made a very pretty picture, sitting on a low stool before the log fire with her hat off, one child on her knee, one leaning against each side of her, and one sitting on the ground, making a carpet of her dress; the mother looking on, amazed and delighted, to see her fry so quiet and so happy, and muttering ejaculations in chorus with her offspring, as they reached the more thrilling portions of the tale. They had arrived at that critical moment, and were sitting, open-mouthed, in a breathless state, as their storyteller came to where the giant proceeds to descend the beanstalk after Jack. At this very instant the door was softly opened, and a dark young man, with a gun in his hand and a game-bag over his shoulder, came into the house.

It was Gilbert—who had preferred to go rabbit-shooting to accompanying his cousin to a grand luncheon-party at a well-known historical castle—who had made bold, vague excuses, and, in spite of Miss Fane's expostulation, coaxing, and indignation, had stayed at home.

No words could paint his amazement when his eyes fell upon the scene before him.

The very pretty girl he had travelled with to Crews (he had not forgotten her yet) sitting among the gamekeeper's imps in the west lodge, telling them stories, and seemingly no stranger.

Who was she? and where did she come from?

He never guessed that she was his aunt's companion, as his amiable cousin had told him, in answer to his query, that she was a totally unrepresentable person.

George half rose when she saw him, and the children, at first a little overawed, ceased to clutch her and say "go on—go on," and he doffed his hat and said,—

"I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before?"

"Yes," she returned, rising and reaching for her hat, despite of tugs that nearly tore her dress from its gathers, "you kindly helped me to change carriages at Crews Junction."

She was not nearly as surprised to see him.

"What a noisy, puzzling place it is, is it not? Are you staying in the neighbourhood?"

Mrs. Graham felt sorry for his ignorance, and burst in,—

"This young lady lives up at the house, Mr. Gilbert; she's your aunt's companion—Miss Grey!"

If a bombshell had burst at his feet Lady Maxwell's nephew could not possibly be more thunderstruck, though he might be a good deal more hurt.

"My aunt's companion!" he stammered, "I don't quite understand."

"It is quite true," said George, feeling more at her ease now that her social status was discovered; "I was coming to her when I met you. I am Lady Maxwell's companion and secretary."

"And how is it that I have never seen you until to-day?" he demanded. "Have you been away?"

She could not tell him the real reason, especially before Mrs. Graham, so she muttered something incoherently about being—a great deal to do, and taking a hurried leave of her much disappointed audience, opened the door and prepared to depart, declaring "that she had no idea that it was so late, and she must go home at once."

"If you will permit me, I will escort you," said Gilbert, also coming to the door, gun in hand; "I am going home also."

They stood thus on the doorstep for a

moment together; the ruddy light of the fire threw their two figures out into bold relief as the gates swung back, and a waggonee dashed through, containing the party, returning from lunch.

They passed by like a flash, but not so quickly but that the disgusted and horrified Miss Fane discerned only too distinctly the outlines of her cousin Gilbert and that odious girl, her aunt's companion.

Then all her plans had availed her nothing!

CHAPTER XI.

A few moments later the very couple whom Miss Fane had striven so hard to keep apart were walking homewards together up the long dark avenue in deep conversation, that is to say, Gilbert was.

He plied his companion with many questions as to how and why she was not visible, even at meal-times; but her pride tied her tongue, and she would not give him any satisfactory answer. She was occupied. She did not like meeting strangers. She was—oh! query?—"very well content as she was."

"I never, never would have guessed you were my aunt's new companion that day we travelled down together," he said, as he strolled along the leaf-strewn path.

"No," returned George, unable to resist the reply. "My hands are not quite so large as a leg of mutton."

But he had instantly forgotten the remark which had ruffled in her mind, and seemed quite at sea with regard to her meaning; or was it a riddle, or what?

He pondered in silence for a few seconds, and then said,—

"Your first place, I suppose, Miss Grey?"

"Yes; I never was from home before."

"I wonder——" and then he stopped, as if he thought better.

"At what? Why do you wonder?" The darkness made her bold, and she was glad to hear the sound of her own voice once more.

"I wonder that your friends allowed you out into the world so young and," he was going to add, pretty, but prudently checked his mind, and said, "to such a lonely dull life as that of companion to an old lady, with whom you have not one idea in common."

"She has been very kind. She gives me a kind of home, and I had none; my mother is dead, and since then I have lived with an aunt; and—and—I like to be independent, and earn my own living to the best of my ability. I am not sufficiently accomplished for a governess. I can play and sing, but I cannot draw; and although I can speak French, that is nothing now without German and Latin."

"And are you to be a companion always?" he asked.

"I suppose so," she returned. "It's better than being in a shop all day, standing from morning till night."

"And excuse me, I do not ask from impertinent curiosity, but have you no friends?"

"I have none that I could live with. There is one family that have been very kind to me, but I've no claim on them at all; they have been too kind to me as it is. I went to them after my mother died. She was an invalid, and not well off. We lived by ourselves. My only sister married, and went to Australia. She half promised to send for me, but," and here her voice broke, it was a sore subject.

"And have you no more relations?" he asked, abruptly.

"My aunt, who lives at Hillford—Mrs. Vance—she is very wealthy. She and my uncle would have given me a home, but—but—my cousins"—she paused again.

"Objected to the arrangement," he suggested, significantly.

"Yes."

"Why should she not tell him the truth at once?"

"And so here you are in your first place—my aunt's first companion. Well, she is not

“Dear old lady. But, by-the-by, how do you like it off with Lizzie?”

“You mean Miss Fane,” evasively, anxiously, looking her brain for an appropriate reply.

“Yes.”

“I scarcely know her. I have scarcely ever spoken to her.”

“Oh! well, we will remedy that in future. I shall look for you at every meal, and in the drawing-room after dinner. I shall tell my aunt she cannot, and shall not make you into a white slave—or it may be one of Lizzie’s mysteries. Do you know I never even knew that you existed—I mean were under the same roof—until I saw you at the gate lodge. I cannot understand it; but it has been an agreeable surprise.”

“You will not see me again,” said Georgie, decidedly; “my present place has been assigned to me. I have plenty of occupation, and please—please, do not say anything about me, nor ask Lady Maxwell to produce me in public, for I shall not come. It is my own wish! Good-night!” So saying, with a hurried bow, she vanished into the house by a side-door, sacred to the upper servants, leaving her escort standing outside on the gravel, in a very perturbed state of mind.

His whole thoughts were occupied with a girl for once in his life. He was in a condition of amazement, admiration, indignation, and perplexity; he did not understand it.

However, he presently said to himself that there was no use in standing out on the gravel in the cold, looking like a fool, and he went in, and just in time to waylay his aunt and cousin before they went to dress for dinner.

He handed his gun to a servant, and lounged into the small drawing-room, and subsided into a chair, saying—

“Well, Lizzie, had you a good party? All the wells, eh?”

“Yes. Most charming afternoon I ever spent, and you had a great loss I can tell you; and I believe that the Wiltons thought your excuses very lame.”

“Did they?” lazily. “I hate luncheon parties. By the way, Aunt Mary, where, in the name of all the graces, did you pick up your pretty companion, Miss Grey? I met her at the west lodge this evening, and walked home with her.”

Lady Maxwell started, and her niece pinched her lips so tightly together that they made just one thin line.

“Auntie picked her up, as you call it, in every sense of the word,” said Lizzie, sharply. “She got her through an advertisement. She looks like it, does she not? A pretty face, as you can see.”

“Yes, thank you,” he interrupted, drily. “Anyone can see that, and I should like to have seen it sooner. Why is she shut up?”

“She is not shut up,” angrily. “She has as much liberty as I have myself. You should not interrupt so, and take the words out of one’s mouth, Gilbert. I say she is pretty, but awfully bad style—not a lady!”

“She seems to be one, if I am any judge,” said that gentleman, in his most cutting manner.

A ready answer was on Lizzie’s tongue, but she restrained herself. By losing her temper over her, or making her, as it were, worth a discussion, she was playing this horrid girl’s game—giving her an interest for Gilbert—and she said with assumed nonchalance—

“Very well, Gilbert, have your own way. Only don’t ask me to associate with her. Her people are the commonest of the common; and now it’s really time to dress. The others went off to their rooms when they came in, and we shall be keeping dinner waiting.”

“Is Miss Grey to be at dinner?” he asked, rising also.

“Not that I am aware of,” very haughtily. “And why not?” leaving his shoulders against the mantelpiece, and looking resolutely at his cousin.

“Really, Gilbert, why ask me? Ask Aunt Mary!” but already Aunt Mary had fled as fast as her age and dimensions permitted.

“Dear Gilbert,” proceeded Lizzie, in a coaxing tone, now gazing up into his face in the most witching manner, “surely you are not—not interested in a person of her class? It’s not your way. You are not curious about her?”

“Yes, I am,” he answered, with a frown.

“Oh, Gilbert! I know you are joking—you don’t mean—”

“That I have fallen in love with her, you would say. No, certainly not; and probably if you had not kept her in the background and made a mystery about her, I never should have looked at, much less thought of her. Now, my curiosity is piqued, my interest is awakened. Hallo!” starting back, “there’s the first gong;” and without another word he quickly turned on his heel and departed, leaving Miss Fane standing alone on the hearth-rug, with a livid face and tightly-looked hands.

“I knew it,” she muttered; “I knew she would do me some harm. I had a presentiment of it the very first day I saw her—a true presentiment; but now she shall go—go, and at once, if I have any influence. Go, by fair means or by foul, before it is too late.”

Miss Fane sought an interview with her aunt the next morning, and after about ten minutes’ feeble resistance the old lady gave in. Miss Grey was to go, and at once. She was so shy, and so pushing, thrusting herself into the way of the gentlemen, and courted notice and attention. This was her crime, much enlarged on by Lizzie. She must be sent away.

“And you, yourself will have to tell her,” continued the niece to her aunt. “It will come better from you, you know.”

“I could not. I’ve never done such a thing in my life as dismiss a companion. I should not know what to say,” nervously.

“You should never have had one,” said Miss Fane, sternly; “however, a note will do. You can write,” as if she was making a concession.

“She must have a week’s notice,” said Lady Maxwell, “to make her arrangements—a week at the very least.”

“A week! Nonsense. ‘Why can’t she go to-morrow? Give her a month’s wages. Why, I will pay that myself,’ eagerly.

But for once the old lady, who occasionally had what her niece called “stubborn fits,” was firm. “It would be scandalous to turn the girl out of doors, as if she had been guilty of any misconduct, and she shall stay a week or more if I choose,” quoth Lady Maxwell; “and it’s all just because you are afraid of her and Gilbert, and she suits me so well, and is so useful, and,” beginning to whimper, “it’s too bad of you, Lizzie, to make me do this; but she shall stay a full week.”

Nothing would move the old lady, and her niece had to give in—give in very reluctantly, as every moment was of vital importance, and delays were proverbially dangerous.

That night Georgie found two things on her dressing-table that surprised her very much. The one was a note directed to her, in Lady Maxwell’s crabbed hand-writing, enclosing a cheque, and her dismissal within a week, and softening the letter down by the mendacious assurance that on due consideration she had really no need for her services. This was a shock to Georgie, she could hardly realise it; but it was not to be her only shock that evening. On the table lay her locket and chain, one of her few ornaments; the locket was half open. She took it up and examined it, and to her great amazement it was empty. Peter’s photograph was gone, the glass was taken out; it lay beside the locket, and what did her incredulous eyes behold on the looking glass? Peter’s portrait, what remained of it, cut up by scissors into about a dozen little pieces.

Who had done it? Why had they done it? Her mind immediately flew to Mary Todd—Mary Todd, of course; how dared she? This indignity, this sacrilege, almost put Lady Maxwell’s note entirely out of Miss Grey’s head. “And it was the only photo I had of Peter,” she cried, with tears in her eyes.

“Oh! Peter, Peter, I was not half-half as sorry as I ought to have been for you, and now that this has been destroyed I shall forget your very face!”

There she sat for an hour in the cold, oblivious of her surroundings; her long brown hair streaming like a mantle over her shoulders, with Lady Maxwell’s letter lying open beside the empty locket, vainly—vainly trying to piece the photograph together; but it had been so fiercely, so maliciously cut up, that all her patient labour was of no avail. Peter’s picture no longer existed.

CHAPTER XII.

TEN days later Miss Grey sits over the embers of a bad fire in the cedar-room—alone of course, and very tired, as is not uncommon from a hard day’s work in the housekeeper’s room; but what is not so usual—in tears. And why?

She has two letters in her lap, and they are open, and we will read them.

The first is her own, returned from South-sea, with “Gone away; no address left”—so much for the missive to the Blaines. The other was from her cousin Jane, and ran as follows:—

“MR DEAR GEORGINA,—Your letter received. We are all very much surprised at your news, and to hear that you are leaving Lady Maxwell already. I hope it is nothing unpleasant. We would be very glad to have you here, but the house is quite full, and we have several sets of visitors coming that will keep all the rooms occupied for some time. I hope you will soon get another situation. There is a home of some kind in London for governesses. I daresay I can get you the address, and you have your salary in hand, I hope? Perhaps your friends, the Blaines, could take you in. Excuse the haste to catch the post.—Your affectionate cousin,
“JANE VANCE.”

Rather a crushing effusion. As Georgie read it through the second time her tears began to fall, and she asked herself, rather hopelessly, what was to become of her? Where was she to go?

She leaned both arms on the round centre table, laid her head down upon them, and indulged in a thoroughly good cry.

She was tired—she was cold; the fire was all but out, and she was telling herself that she was not wanted anywhere.

At this juncture a single knock came to the door.

No answer. She did not hear it. Another, and then Mr. Gilbert Vernon cautiously entered the apartment.

In a moment he had taken in the whole scene. The dismal, shabby room; the round table, with the cloth half-dragged off; the girl’s attitude, typical of despair; the empty grate; the general dreariness of the entire picture!

Georgie started up, pushed back her hair, and looked at him fiercely.

“This—is this my own private apartment!”

“I wanted to see you,” he returned, meekly—trying hard to look as if he did not know she had been crying. “Is it true—I got it from my aunt with difficulty—that you are going away?”

“Yes, I am,” she returned, rather defiantly.

“And when, may I ask?”

“In four days’ time—next Tuesday.”

“And why?” laconically.

“I cannot tell you,” irritably.

“And where?”

“You would make a capital lawyer, Mr. Vernon. I cannot tell you this either, as I do not know myself.”

“Your friends?”

“I have no friends!” impatiently. “Don’t talk to me of my friends!”

“Then let me be your friend, Miss Grey. Such as I am you may rely on me to help you. Do not look at me like that and laugh. I am serious, and you are angry and sarcastic

As a rule I can't bear young ladies! This is candid, is it not? But I like you, and will be only too happy if you will let me help you."

"Help me? You cannot! Assistance from you would be worse than none!—thank you all the same. Though I am younger than you, and know nothing of the world scarcely, I know that much. No young man can help a girl, unless he is her relation, such as her brother, her cousin, her husband, or—"

"Or her lover," added Mr. Gilbert, significantly. "Hou have neither father, brother, or cousin, Miss Grey?"

"No; very few people have as few relations as I have."

"Then, if I ask another question will you be angry, I wonder?"

"I cannot tell; very likely I shall," impatiently. "Why should you question me?"

"Just one more, and the last; have you a lover?"

"Mr. Vernon, it is no business of yours, and you are very strange to ask; but, since I have told you so much, I have not—not a soul in the world, except one girl, who is abroad, cares two straws whether I am alive or dead!"

"Oh! I say, Miss Grey, come," he expostulated.

"Then read that," tossing him Jane's letter. "That is from my cousin—from the daughter of my mother's only and very rich sister—from my nearest kin. Perhaps," with an unpleasant little laugh, "that will convince you!"

Her visitor presumed to take a seat at last, and glanced over the note in his hand with a frown on his face; then pushed it back towards her, and said,—

"You are well rid of such people, that's all I can say."

"And they think themselves well rid of me."

"Now, have you any plans, may I ask?" leaning his elbows on the table, and looking over at her steadily.

"I really do not see why you should ask, Mr. Vernon; but I dare say you mean well, and I ought to be grateful to you for the interest you take in me. You will observe that there is no competition for the pleasure of my company! I think I shall advertise again at once, go up to London, and look out for some quiet lodgings where I can stay until I get another situation."

"And you go on Tuesday, I think you said?"

"Yes, on Tuesday morning."

Georgie was slightly surprised that he made no further remark, but pushed back his chair and abruptly left the room. Certainly he was a very strange young man. She did not dwell long upon Gilbert and his unexpected visit and abrupt departure; but knowing that there was not much time before post time she got out her writing case and proceeded to draw up another advertisement for the papers. She spoiled several sheets before she accomplished a few lines that notified that "a young gentleman would be glad to take the place of nursery governess in a small, quiet family; remuneration not so much an object as a happy home."

This was to be an evening of visits, for ere she had put the above into its envelope the door opened and Lady Maxwell entered, in her red shawl, and on the verge of tears.

"Oh, my dear girl, you are not writing about another place, I hope!" she gasped. "It's not to be thought of. Gilbert has just been to me, and I'm—I'm quite upset. I never saw him so resolved upon anything as your staying on for the present, and you know I have often told you I would do anything for Gilbert—anything; and he worried it all out about Lizzie, and how it was her doing, and she insisted on your going. I had to tell him all!" cried the old lady, simultaneously raising her fat hands and her voice. "He said he would never come here again if I turned you out for Lizzie's whims; and I told him how I did not want to part with you,

and how I begged and prayed Lizzie, and how she said you were getting undue influence of me for your own aims, and money, and all that," she panted out; "and that in my interest you should go! But it's not what I wish, and you know that; and that, though Lizzie is my niece, she tyrannises over me, and makes me do things against my will. You are to stay if you will. Say you will," seeing Georgie shake her head. "Oh, you will; you must, at least for a month, at any rate, to please me! Georgie, now, you can't refuse me," patting her on the arm, and now playing her last card, "Lizzie is going—going next week! She shall go and you will stay. Now, not another word," beating a quick retreat to the door, as was her custom, before her reinstated companion could find any appropriate reply.

For two or three days Georgie (still in the cedar-room and unknowing of the contest) was a kind of shuttlecock between Gilbert and Lizzie.

At one time Lizzie worked upon her aunt's fears most successfully. Again Miss Grey was to go; but a few minutes' talk with Gilbert would change the whole aspect of things, and Gilbert and Lady Maxwell were victors, and the result was that Georgie was to stay as long as it suited her convenience.

The guests little knew of the secret struggle that was going on, and all took their departure without ever having seen or heard of Miss Fane's skeleton in the cupboard, her aunt's pretty companion; and once they had gone their several ways Georgie reappeared as usual, and took up her former task of reading to and writing for her employer, driving with her, and arranging her woolwork and crochets.

Gilbert, now that he had had his way, and that Lizzie (who did not leave) had been wonderfully civil of late to Miss Grey, took little or no notice of her, but devoted himself to his cousin, as a kind of amends, riding with her, skating with her, walking with her, and altogether paying her more attention than he had ever done in his life before.

He had beaten her in her attempt to get rid of Miss Grey, and he wished to show that he was a generous victor, though they never—never touched upon that delicate subject. All the same, although Mr. Vernon now scarcely spoke to his protégée, he thought a good deal more of her than any one suspected, or that he could account for to himself.

He found himself thinking of her in the midst of Lizzie's most animated conversations, most vivid descriptions.

Despite of himself his eyes constantly strayed to where she was sitting. His ears were ever on the alert to hear what she was saying.

Never had any one occupied his mind so much since he was born. Could it be that he had fallen in love with this pretty nobody, without a penny, and with, as far as his experience went, a somewhat sharp tongue? He believed that he had, and prepared to abandon himself to circumstances without another struggle.

Miss Fane's acceptance of the situation and her own moral overthrow had been a marvel to her aunt, but Miss Fane's anger and her aims were not extinguished.

They were merely smouldering, and ready to break forth into full activity at a moment's notice, being only kept in abeyance by prudence.

Mary Todd was in her mistress's confidence. Mary had her own reasons for detesting "the companion," and Mary was ready to aid her young lady, heart and soul.

She liked adventure and excitement; she looked on life as a kind of play, and people as the puppets of circumstances.

She had no fear and no scruples; had a face that lied as well as her tongue with the most unblushing effrontery; and she felt that she would like to see a little drama acted at

the Manor—just a little easily-got-up scene—that would represent the banishment of Miss Grey in the deepest disgrace.

"Just you leave her to me, miss," said Mary to her mistress, "and she won't be here another week, as sure as my name is Mary Todd! Don't you be surprised at anything, miss—that's all I ask you."

Mary had a plot sketched out in her head; but before Miss Todd had time to mature her scheme a great surprise awaited her no less than every one in the place and in the neighbourhood. Mr. Vernon finding that Miss Grey was resolved to seek another situation, and was adamant to Lady Maxwell's entreaties that she should stay (knowing well that she was liable to be sent adrift at a moment's notice, the moment Mr. Vernon went, and Miss Fane resumed ascendancy), and she was resolved to accept the first suitable offer that came her way.

This she had told Mr. Vernon very impressively, when he had tried to prevail on her to change her mind.

"I suppose you have heard of nothing yet, Miss Grey?" he said, finding her in the library, alone for a wonder, before dinner, where she had hurried down to finish off one or two notes for Lady Maxwell.

"Nothing as yet, Mr. Vernon," she replied, looking up as she finished directing one envelope; "but any post may bring me an answer."

"It's a nursery-governess you wish to be this time?" scanning her closely.

"Yes," evading his eyes, and making a show of being busy.

"An awful billet, I should say," shrugging his shoulders. "I think I know of something that might suit," he said, after a considerable silence, as he stood at the opposite side of the table, and watched her deft and nimble fingers fold a three-cornered note.

"A situation for me, Mr. Vernon?" she echoed, suddenly looking up, pen in hand. "It's very, very good of you to interest yourself so much. Is it anyone you know?" her eyes now fastened on his face.

"Yes!" He spoke always rather slowly, just on the verge of a drawl. "Someone I know very well."

"And is the place vacant at present?" she asked, with kindling interest, for she longed to be gone for more reasons than one.

"Yes it is; in short, I don't exactly know how to put it, but the situation of Mrs. Gilbert Vernon is not filled—will you take it?"

"I suppose this is a joke!" said Georgie, now scarlet, her hand trembling as she dipped her pen in the ink. "I assure you, Mr. Vernon, that you have it quite to yourself. I fail to see the point of it!"

"It's no joke, Miss Grey. I never was more in earnest in my life. I never asked a girl to marry me before, and you toss your head and call it a joke!" in an aggrieved tone.

"Then, if it is not a joke," she said, now gravely looking at him, "you must be mad."

"Thank you," reddening with anger. "I am so far perfectly sane. I ask you to be my wife, and you call me a madman."

"For your own sake, yes," rising; "think of your position and mine."

"You are a lady; that's quite enough for me."

"I have no money, no position, no connections."

"But I have, and can give them all to you. What's mine is yours."

"Think of your aunt, Miss Fane, every one?"

"I won't. I don't wish to think of anyone but you; but I see there is no hope for me. You are glad of all these excuses, and you don't care a straw about me. You put them just to save me the pain of a refusal."

"No, no, Mr. Vernon, you are wrong! I do care for you. I do like you; you are almost the only person who has been kind to me," and here her lip quivered, and her voice broke.

"That's only gratitude! I hate gratitude," he interrupted. "Come," reaching over and taking the pen from her hand, "say one thing or the other honestly—yes or no! Don't think of money, or fine clothes, or fine houses, but just of me, Gilbert Vernon. Could you be happy with me. Rich or poor, will you be my wife?"

"Yes, Mr. Vernon, I will," she answered at last in a whisper.

"Can you say, Gilbert, I never cared for anyone in the world as much as I do for you? Look me full in the face and tell me that. Come now."

"Gilbert," she repeated, fascinated by his insistence—his eager, ardent, breathless importunity.

"Gilbert, I never cared for anyone in the world as much as I do for you, but I am not worthy of you."

"And you will marry me soon, and be my companion for life," ignoring the last speech.

"Yes, if you wish."

"Tell me why you have been so distant and cool to me for the last ten days—why, when I spoke, you scarcely answered; when I looked at you, you turned away; when I intrigued and manoeuvred to find you alone, you fled the moment you saw me—tell me," taking both her hands, "the reason of this—for I insist on knowing it—why did you avoid me?"

Whatever the reason was she could not develop it now. There, as if turned into a statue, stood Miss Fane in the doorway. The tableau she saw was quite enough for her—Gilbert holding both that girl's hands, and bending towards her as if he was literally hanging on her words. It could mean but one thing (for Gilbert was by no means given to such demonstrations)—he was, as she had predicted, befuddled by this odious girl, and he was going to make her his wife.

Her surmises were perfectly correct, the impending marriage was immediately announced, and, after a short time, took place very quietly. Miss Fane was not bridesmaid, but she evinced a great interest in the whole affair, and gave her intimate friends a sketch of the bride in the blackest tints.

The happy couple left for a long tour on the Continent, George carrying with her one secret she had not dared to divulge to her husband.

"Indeed," she said to herself, "there was no occasion that he should know, and there was her promise to Grace, and he was naturally of such a very jealous disposition there was no use in making him unhappy, and he had really and sincerely every thought of her heart."

All the same, he was not aware that this was not the first time the pretty girl beside him had been a bride, and his was not the first wedding-ring that had been placed on her finger.

CHAPTER XIII.

Let us imagine that four years have elapsed since the close of the last chapter—four years of many changes, social and political; four years of births, marriages, and deaths; and four very happy years for George Vernon.

She reigned as mistress where she once lived as lady-companion, for Lady Maxwell is dead. She was carried off by a sharp attack of bronchitis the year after her nephew's marriage, and George ranges at will through those great stately reception rooms and old-fashioned pleasure-grounds mistress and monarch of all she surveys. She has many friends now. Mrs. Gilbert Vernon is a great lady in her way. She is a beauty, she is very popular with high and low, she is a total contrast to shy, defiant, miserable Miss Grey, and often wonders if she can be the same person.

Look at her now, as she sits under a haycock in the pleasure-ground this broiling August day, supported on either side by a son in a short white frock—too young to under-

stand fairy tales, but not too young to understand strawberries.

These are Messrs. Jack and Alick, aged two and three. They like nothing so much as a good play with mother, and mother (who looks younger now at twenty-four than she did at twenty) indulges them very often in a good romp. At the present moment there is a truce—a truce dedicated to demolishing a leaf of strawberries; but Mrs. Vernon's hair is a good deal tumbled, so is her white dress, so is the haycock.

"Now, boys," she says, tossing away the cabbage leaf; "I really cannot play any more—it's too hot; and, besides this, it will soon be your tea-time. If anyone was to come you have made me not fit to be seen."

Some one did come stealthily across the grass just in time to hear this speech. Mr. Vernon looked over the top of the haycock, and discovered his family reposing in a row on the other side. He thought them a very presentable-looking party—that his wife was always fit to be seen, and never more so than now. After this secret inspection he gave a little growl, which was responded to by a scream of delight, and toppled a quantity of hay down upon his indignant wife and delighted offspring.

"Gilbert! Yes, you, of course," she said, as she jumped up and pushed a quantity of hay out of her smiling eyes; "how early you are home?"

"Not a bit of it, it's nearly five o'clock, and nurse is looking for these young people, to take them in and make them tidy for tea. She told me she had hunted for you high and low. A nice thing for the mistress of the house to be playing hide-and-go-seek with her servants," he added, with a twinkle in his eye. "Here, Jack, I'll give you a ride home," hoisting the youngest on to his shoulder as he spoke; and George, with Alick by the hand, walked by his side across the newly-cut grass towards where a portly figure was standing on the terrace steps, shading her eyes with her hand and looking out for the party.

A charming family group anyone would have said who had an eye for a good subject. The pretty, tall girl, in the rather tumbled white dress, leading the curly-headed little boy in the short, stiff petticoats, makes a very good pendant for the dark young man with the child on his back, whose chubby fingers are fastened tight round his neck, whose little fat legs are stuck out in front, and who is administering very telling kicks with them from time to time, as if he wished to hurry the mode of progression.

"I say, young gentleman," expostulated his parent, "you need not break my ribs, you know! I see a bad look-out for your pony some of these days. I suppose the quicker I go the sooner I'll get rid of you," beginning to run, and, after making an extensive circle, jumping two flower-beds, he arrived tolerably breathless at the foot of the terrace, and handed over his very reluctant rider to Mrs. Martin, his nurse, who, in spite of screams of "Fader—more—more," was borne away tearfully.

"We are a nice pair of objects if anyone happened to drop in," said Gilbert, standing at the foot of the steps and gazing at his wife, with a broad smile. "Your hair, my love, is like a haystack; and look at my collar and tie! But don't go in yet, George; come away down here," indicating a rustic seat, "I have a great piece of news for you!"

"News!" walking slowly beside him. "Something about politics, I'm sure," she said, with a smile. "You are going to canvas the county. I knew it was coming."

"No, madam;" putting his arm inside of hers, with a little gesture that would show to any looker-on, if there were one, that these married folk were lovers still; "wrong for once, and, as with all your cleverness, you would never guess it. So sit down here," indicating a bench under a beech-tree, "and just listen to me."

It will be seen that the Vernons were an unusually happy couple. You had only to look in their faces to be aware of that fact.

After George's rather strange, eventful, and not very happy girlhood, she had found a haven of repose at last. Not a cloud had ever ruffled her married life. Never had she and Gilbert had even one disagreement!—and how few can say this!

He (like many cynical, apparently invulnerable bachelors) had made the very best of husbands and fathers. His home was everything to him; his wife was his idol; two such children never were seen as Jack and Alick, in his opinion, though he kept these opinions very prudently to himself.

Even George had no idea of all she was to Gilbert. He did not show her the whole of his heart, from a latent fear that she might use her power, and perhaps despise him.

All the same he was master. When he said a thing he meant it; what he ordered must be done; everyone about the place was aware of that, as well as of the fact that he was the best and most liberal of employers.

The old manor and lands were fittingly ruled now by a firm, light hand, and everything prospered with Gilbert Vernon and all his belongings.

And George was so happy now, loved so thoroughly, so absorbed in her present life, that she looked back on the past as through a haze.

Her real life began when she married Gilbert Vernon. Could that other ceremony in the dreary dirty little office at Portsmouth have been a dream? She could not realise it, and she shrank from the mere recollection of Peter; and Peter Blaine's existence had never been made known to the man beside her. It never need; it was just the one little corner of her mind he might not look into, and did it matter? No! He was so jealous, he had such a belief in her love, her first love, being all for himself that she dared not break the spell. To him she was the purest, the most innocent, the most adorable and unsophisticated of her sex! And so in a certain sense she was; but still there was that other man in the back pages of her life—pages he had never read, and never need read, she told herself. She tried to put the thought of this secret from her, and to a great extent succeeded.

Present happiness is a great antidote to disagreeable recollections. Only for her promise, her oath to Grace, she would have told him ere she married him, she assured herself, when her conscience smote her. And when Grace had paid her a long visit, the year of her marriage, and begged her to release her, Grace had said "not now, not now, some day!"

George had felt at the time glad of the reprieve, and had felt a thrill of guilt. As she was conscious of this relief—and Grace's permission had never come, for Grace was dead, had died quite suddenly—that was the only cloud that had marred George's happiness during the last four years; and many bitter tears she had shed for poor Grace, tears tenderly wiped away, at last by time and by Gilbert.

This was the only shadow that had fallen on George's path up to the present; and as we see those two handsome radiant young people sitting together under [the beech tree—she with a fan of leaves in her hand, beating off the midges and agitating the sultry air, he with his hand leaning on the bench behind her—we would say that they were the very beau ideal of a happy pair, and so they are! But alas! for their sunny days. Alas! for their serene horizon, already unknown to them. A small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, has arisen in the West.

(To be continued.)

I THINK that it must somewhere be written that the virtues of mothers shall occasionally be visited on their children, as well as the sins of fathers.

WHAT IS THE USE OF FRETTING?

Oh, what is the use of fretting
Over scenes and days gone by?
'Tis wiser to be forgetting
Those evils that ought to die—
The sins, and worry, and trouble,
And the woes and pain untold,
Not single, my friend, but double,
That haunted the days of old.

If you'd only look on the patches
Of the sunlight uneffaced,
And hear the melodious snatches
That linger along the waste,
I'm sure you would feel the better,
For brooding o'er trouble past
Is a harsh and chilling letter
That will crush you down at last.

Away with your fret and sorrow,
And above their torment rise!
Look up to a coming morrow,
With its cheerful sun and skies.
For the future we are living,
And the past for us is dead;
So our thoughts let us be giving
To the things that are not dead.

W. D. D.

"A TANGLED WEB."

CHAPTER I.

BRAMINGTON RECTORY.

THE snow laid thick on the frosty ground, each tree and hedge-row covered with the same white mantle, although but mid-November, whilst icicles as crystal pendants hung from branch and thatch, and glistened in the bright noon sun.

"We shall have a hard winter, I'm thinkin'," said Farmer Boyd to the parson, as they met on a broad expanse of almost untrodden snow, save for a path which led from one stile to the other, where a high hedge divided it from the adjoining field, which was pressed down hard and slippery by the passers to and fro—not that there were many besides the farm labourers, who were the chief inhabitants of Bramington, the squire and rectors with the exception of two or three small farmers, being the only so styled gentlemen's houses in the village.

"I think so, Boyd," was the reply of Mr. Borun, whose clerical dress looked more than usual dimly black in contrast to the white surroundings; "the haws seem very plentiful, and the berries thick on the Christmas. It is a long time since we have had a true old-fashioned English winter, and you know, Boyd, the old saying, 'A green Christmas a fat churchyard.'"

"Right you are, sir," replied the other, "but here come your little folks, so I'll be off."

The little folks were still at some distance, but the bright scarlet cloaks they wore made them visible long before their faces could be recognised. They were four in number, all girls, the youngest a bony wee-omee pet of five, whilst the eldest was just verging on fifteen, and evidently considered herself too much of a woman to scamper over the frosty ground to meet her father as she and Eleanor, the next one, walked leisurely on, following in the footsteps of the two little ones (as they were called), Maude and Alice, who ran a race to see who should be there first.

"Am I not first, papa?" asked Baby Ally, as she caught hold of his hand, and just saved herself from a fall, as Maude, in her anxiety to win the race, had had recourse to the mean advantage of a slide, which had nearly had the effect of upsetting her little sister.

"Yes, darling," replied her father, as wishing Mr. Boyd good-day he moved forward to

meet his other daughters, between the two who had each hold of his hand.

"We thought you would come home this way, papa," said Edith, the eldest, as they met, "so we came. But is anything but nice climbing over stiles covered with snow. Couldn't you manage to open the gate?"

"I'll try," was the response; but the others, with the exception of Alice, who crept through the bars of the same, had climbed over the stile, and laughingly pushed the gate open from the other side before Mr. Borun had laid a hand on it.

Their bright, sunny faces were all aglow, and the ripple of their joyous laughter resounded clear and bell-like in the frosty air as they ran on to the Rectory.

"How is it Miss Gruesome was not with you?" asked Mr. Borun of Edith, as they followed on.

"Oh, mamma wanted her to help look up the winter things, and see what new ones are required. Those I have outgrown are to be altered, I heard her say, for the others, and those Addie—"

At the mention of the last name Mr. Borun turned to his daughter, and the rest of the sentence died on her lips, as the pained look on her father's face made the tears start to her eyes.

As she had said, Mrs. Borun was busily engaged on their return, sorting, with the governess's assistance, dresses, jackets, wraps, &c., of last year's wear, to be renovated, whilst those which were deemed too far gone were piled on one side, to be divided amongst the poor parishioners; and, as she continued her task, she lingered long over one or two articles, which she appeared to handle with tender, loving care, as she folded them carefully and laid them on one side.

Amongst the latter was a scarlet cloak, similar to that worn by the other girls, and as the mother's eye scanned it over to see that no moth had desecrated its woollen texture, the tears flowed freely down her careworn cheeks, as, placing a small bag of camphor within its folds, she was about to place it with the others she had treasured, when her hand came in contact with a card which was in the pocket of the same, and, withdrawing it from the hiding-place where it had remained unobserved so many months, she beheld the photo of a young man.

With a start she turned the picture to see if there was any writing at the back. No, not a word, only the name of the photographer in gilt letters running across.

The original could not have been more than twenty-four or twenty-five. He was very dark, the features were faultless, a cluster of black curls carelessly fell over the high forehead; beneath the arched and pencilled brows were soft dark eyes, which even on paper lent a charm to the whole face, whilst the lips, over the upper one of which hung a heavy moustache, were slightly parted, showing a portion of white even teeth.

"I suppose these are no good?" asked the Governess, referring to a lot of woollen stockings which had been darned and darned until they were destined for the cast-off bundle.

"Oh, no, Miss Gruesome! throw them on one side," replied Mrs. Borun, as she concealed the photo in the bosom of her dress, and the Rector entered the room.

"The children told me you were here, Adeline," he said. "Haven't you nearly finished sorting those worn-out things?"

She looked up and saw her husband's gaze also rivetted on the small heap, on which she had placed the scarlet cloak, whilst her face became flushed to as deep a hue, as the tears she could not restrain welled to her eyes—and such eyes, too, notwithstanding the years, which might have robbed others of the power they once had of portraying every emotion of the mind, they remained still the same—and Edward Borun but met them once to know what was passing in his wife's breast.

"Come along," he said, tenderly, raising her from the kneeling posture she assumed

during her occupation, "Miss Gruesome can finish that, and little Ally has such a lot to tell you of her adventures in the morning walk."

They had left the room now, shutting the door behind them on Miss Gruesome and her task, when passing his arm around the waist of his wife he drew her closer to his side. "I thought you promised me to forget," he said. "Is it kind," he continued, "to the others; they at least are obedient?"

His tones were very quiet, but to Mrs. Borun they appeared stern, as she knew his nature was, but he kissed her more tenderly than he had done for many years; and when she sat at the foot of the table, around which they were all assembled for early dinner, she had almost forgotten the subject of their past conversation in her present happiness, until, as little Ally's head afterwards rested on her bosom as she climbed on her lap by the fire, and thus came in contact with the photo she had hidden away but a short time previous, it was recalled to her memory.

"Oh! mamma, do let Ally see," said the child, as her mother, drawing it out, endeavoured to conceal it from observation. "Papa, do look," and she passed it to where her father sat on the other side reading.

"Who is it?" he asks his wife, as he took the picture from Ally's hand, who made no reply, when passing it to Edith he resumed his book, on which he appeared too intent for further questioning, until an exclamation from the latter aroused his attention.

"Why is it Maurice Davington, isn't it, mamma?" and as Eleanor and Maude confirmed her assertion, Mr. Borun again took the picture from his daughter's hand, when after looking at it for a second or two he threw it on the flames, at which Ally set up a terrific howl at having her pretty picture burnt.

"Take her from the room, Edith," said her father, referring to the child, who, notwithstanding her protestations that she would be good, was forcibly carried upstairs, and consigned to the tender care of Miss Gruesome.

The subject of the photo was dropped, and Mrs. Borun, leaving her chair by the fire, advanced to the table, to which she drew a large basket filled with unopened stockings and socks, in the repairing of which the girls took their seats round the same to assist.

"How long is it to Christmas, mamma?" asked Eleanor, as she poked her finger through a large hole, to make sure of the spot where she was to commence darning.

"Four weeks to-day," replied Mrs. Borun, with a sigh. "Oh! dear, how I wish it was all over."

"All over, mamma?" cried the girls, in one breath. "I don't; I think it the jolliest time of the whole year, and I do hope we shall go to plenty of parties. Don't you remember, Edie," said Eleanor, "how we laughed when, instead of dancing at The Olives as we had hoped to do, we were stuck in the snow, and had to be dug out before we could get home, which we did about two in the morning?"

"Anything but a laughing matter," replied her sister, as her mother looked up with a frightened, warning look at both. But it came too late. Mr. Borun, notwithstanding the book on which he had appeared so intent, had heard the topic of their conversation, as, shutting the former with a gesture of impatience,—

"I thought I forbade that The Olives, or anything connected with that place, should ever be mentioned in this house," he said, in an angry tone.

Mrs. Borun stooped low over her work, as she noted the colour mount to the temples of her daughters, who for some seconds after plied their needles in silence, until a servant, entering with the tea-tray, they were, for a time, put on one side.

Mr. Borun was considered still a handsome man, although time had declared him middle-aged. His once dark hair was now grey—rather, the little which remained, as the grass

bordering of a flower bed, round the bald top of his head; his eyes were a deep violet, but hot and fiery, whilst his mouth showed a determination of will it was hard to upset. His wife was a little woman, whom neither age nor care could make other than she was—a sweet face whose beauty would ever remain, although her cheeks lacked the roundness of youth, and the lines in the fair skin might be a trifle deeper; but the blue eyes could never lose their gentleness, and the flaxen hair might shine a little less, but was still soft and fair.

She was devotedly attached to her home, husband, and children; they were her world, and the study of their happiness was the sole aim of her existence.

Although a rectory it was not a rich living, and to her fell the task of economising, whilst Edward Borun had no more idea of the value of money than the baby Ally.

He had been the youngest of a large family, brought up in every extravagance—an extravagance which in after-years would have proved his ruin had the government of the household been in his hands; but the partner he had chosen, although beneath him in social position, being a farmer's daughter, had not only ruled the home, but, unconsciously, him so far as to save him from the debt into which he would have inevitably run.

He was passionately attached to the wife he had won when she was but a girl, which, notwithstanding that his relatives considered the marriage beneath him, he never regretted—the only time he allowed pride, which was his great stumbling-block, not to stand in the way of his happiness.

His daughters were fine, handsome girls, fast growing into womanhood, Maudie and Ally the only two now under the charge of Miss Gruesome, who was as much assistant to the mother as she was governess to the children.

Although but five o'clock it was quite dark, nothing to be seen within but the grim, fantastic shadows thrown by the firelight over the different objects in the room, whilst without, it was but one sheet of spotless white.

Mr. Borun had fallen asleep after the tea-things had been removed, when the door softly opening, a tiny, white-robed creature ran into the room, followed by nurse, who had brought her to say good-night.

The episode of the picture, and the disgrace in which she had left the room was forgotten as her little dainty pink feet trotting across the dim-lighted carpet she jumped on to her father's lap.

"Addie, my pet, my darling!" said the father, as still asleep he clasped the child to his bosom; but as her rose-bud mouth met his he awoke, for the moment confused, but the next he pressed her to his breast, and kissed her fondly, as a tear fell on the golden head.

CHAPTER II.

"THE OLIVES."

MR. DAVERING, the owner of "The Olives," was a man between fifty and sixty years of age. He had become partially blind, through having spent the early and chief part of his life under an Eastern sky, although he would have been awfully offended had any one hinted that he was thus afflicted.

His house was the receptacle of almost every curiosity—native and foreign—it was possible to conceive, which he had collected from time to time.

It was a fine old residence, though ugly in the extreme, standing in the midst of its park-like grounds, the beauty of which, with its wooded growth and velvet sward, fully compensated for the same.

The interior was all that wealth could provide or luxury require; the furniture was superb and costly, and the nick-nacks with which the drawing-room tables were crowded were unique and rare.

Maurice Davering, senior—for there was a younger member of the family of the same name—was of a suspicious, mistrustful nature, to such an extent that even the guests (and he was fond of society), who at his invitation became inmates of The Olives, he regarded with as much confidence as he would have done Mr. Peace or his colleagues.

He looked on every one as a rogue until he found them honest, and would invariably, before retiring to rest, each night accompany the butler on an inspection of his treasures in each room.

In what was called the "Museum," a room adjoining the drawing-room, he was not so particular, all his curiosities there consisting of shells, &c., from every shore which was washed by the blue waves, being in large glass cases affixed to the wall, as also birds and fish of every description, some stuffed, others skeletons, but all in cases, which ranged one above another to the ceiling.

Even to the illustrated papers that were delivered weekly the same vigilance was expended to see that the visitors did not surreptitiously purloin the same, which, as Sampson the butler was considered to possess "the eye of a eagle," that duty devolved upon him.

"The Olives" were situated about three miles from Bramington Rectory by road, but across the fields the distance was much less, the two parishes, Bramington and Lorton, in which the former was, adjoining each other, and the church, which served for both, midway between.

It wanted now but three weeks to Christmas, and, as was the custom, Mr. Davering was never from home at that time. He was not a bachelor; but all that was ever known of Mrs. Davering was a picture which hung in her husband's dressing-room; but over this a veil had been drawn for years, and whether the lady was alive or dead was a secret. But gossip would say that she went from him one cold, bitter night, leaving behind her no clue, and that the friend he trusted, who sat his bread and drank of his cup, disappeared at the same time; but, after, all who once knew the open, frank-hearted Maurice Davering could scarcely recognise him in the suspicious, narrow-minded man he from that time became.

A boy of about five years used to run about the place, supposed to be his nephew; but whatever the relationship between them he was the only creature on whom he seemed to place his affection, and who, as the years rolled on, appeared to restore him in part to his former self.

"And so you want to run up to town before Christmas," said Mr. Davering, as he and his nephew sat in the smoking-room previous to going to bed, after the rest had retired.

"I should like to for a few days," replied the other, a young man of twenty-five, who, placing his feet on the bars, and tilting his chair to the extremity of safety, emitted a volume of smoke from his lips.

"Humph!" said the old man, "if you must go you must; but it seems to me that very urgent business is for ever taking you to London. Now, you know, I can't see so well as I used to, but, Maurice, I am not so blind as you would like to have me."

"I don't understand you, sir," replied Maurice, bringing his chair back with such a jerk as narrowly to escape the tail of a little dog lying beneath it.

"Then the sooner you begin to do so the better," said the other. "You either marry Christine Audriens, or take the consequences. Her father was the only friend I ever knew. He died, and in his last moments I promised to carry out his latest wish, that in the event of your both growing up you should become man and wife."

"A very foolish and selfish promise," said Maurice. "I love Christy dearly, as I would a sister, but—"

"I'll have no buts, sir," exclaimed Mr.

Davering, angrily. "She is a lady, she is handsome, accomplished, bright and clever; you have been brought up together, that there can be no drawbacks to find in each other's disposition of which you are not already aware. What more on earth do you require?"

"To go to bed and sleep over it, uncle," replied Maurice, and rising he turned his back to the fire, preliminary to throwing away the end of his cigar, when the door was softly opened from without.

"May I come in?" said a gentle voice, and as both gentlemen answered in the affirmative, a young girl entered the room.

She was of medium height, fairly proportioned, with a bright piquant face, more French than English; dark, soft eyes, shaded by long black lashes, and over her forehead little ringlets of the same hue clustered.

"What, Christine, child?" exclaimed the elder man. "Why, I thought you had retired to rest long ago!"

"So I had, or, rather, so I tried to," said the girl; "but the wind whistled and groaned among the chimneys, and seemed to rattle in the old wainscoting till I became so nervous I could not sleep, and thinking you might still be up slipped on my wrap and came to have a chat here."

"Stir up the fire, Maurice," said his uncle. "Why, the child is quite cold."

Maurice did as requested, when saying,—"Well, I'm off now, uncle." He bade him and Christine good-night, glad of the opportunity to escape from the subject which the former ever brought on the tapis when he was alone with him.

Up the wide, soft carpeted stairs, along the cold stone corridors, until reaching his own door he entered, giving no further thought to the late conversation than to banish all idea of acquiescing to his uncle's wish, as he laid his head on his pillow to dream of another face, with eyes of limpid blue—to him the most beautiful face he had ever seen.

And it was late, very late, before Christine and Mr. Davering retired to rest, as together they sat over the fire, which cracked and blazed in the bright grate, his hand passing and repassing over the raven curls, one of which ever and anon he would lovingly twist round his thin fingers, and then admiringly place it on the others.

He was very thoughtful, and the silence was scarcely broken between them, as they both gazed in the burning coals.

"Christine," at last said the old man, "you are very fond of Maurice, are you not?"

"Fond of Maurice?" answered the girl, as she looked up with an astonished gaze into the other's face—"of course I am fond of him. What makes you ask, Gardy?"

"You know, Christine?" he replied, "I am getting an old man now, and I want very much to see you happy before I go. I mean," he said, "I should be happier did I know you had some one to care for you, my child, to love you, Christine."

Her bewildered look for the moment stayed the words on his lips, as throwing her arms around his neck, "Gardy, my own dear Gardy," she cried, "don't talk like that; what do you mean about going? But here is Sampson to go round the rooms with you," she added, as the butler, according to custom, at twelve o'clock entered the room.

"Never mind, Sampson," said his master, "Miss Christine will go round with me to-night; you can go to bed."

The latter took up the candlestick the man had placed on the side-table, and telling Mr. Davering she was ready, folded her wrap closer around her, as she proceeded to lead him from the room.

The air struck piercingly cold, as they entered on the passage leading to the museum and drawing-rooms, the inner one of which they had satisfactorily surveyed, and were about to go round the larger one when a scream from Christine caused Mr. Davering to look in the direction of a large double

glass-door which led on to the lawn, to which she pointed.

The curtains of the same were partially drawn, so that the large expanse of snow over which the moon threw her light was plainly visible, showing pressed against the window the dark figure of a woman, watching the movements of those within; but, as Christine's scream proved she was discovered, she disappeared before the impaired vision of Mr. Davering could take in the situation.

"What is it?" he asked, turning to the girl, who stood shivering by his side, partly from cold, but mostly from fear.

"A face, Gardy," she replied, her teeth chattering the while, "a face pressed against the window pane?"

"A face! man or woman?" he asked. "I see no face," and he advanced to the window, but nothing was visible but the trees on the snowy lawn as they swayed their heavily laden branches to and fro in the frosty air.

"It must have been fancy, you are tired and nervous. Come away, darling, and he drew the rich velvet curtain across.

"It was no fancy, Gardy," said Christine, as she and Mr. Davering left the room. "A woman with great, black eyes, and a thin, worn face, stood where I told you. She was all in black, and as I screamed she disappeared."

"I will tell Sampson to see that the shutters are closed after dark in future," he replied, as, parting with Christine on the landing leading to her room, he bade her "good-night."

CHAPTER III.

BEDFORD PLACE.

It was some time before Christine closed her eyes, and when she did the vision of that weird face, with its black eyes and dishevelled locks, were ever present to her in her dreams. It was late in the morning when she awoke, and Mr. Davering and Maurice had almost finished their breakfast when she entered the room.

"And how is my pet this morning?" asked the former, as the girl bent to kiss him, whilst Maurice raised from the fender the egg and bacon he had kept hot for her.

"I am all right, thank you," she replied. "But did Gardy tell you of my scare of last night?" she asked, addressing the former. "I could not sleep without seeing that dreadful woman."

"What dreadful woman?" asked Maurice. "I never heard anything of it."

"Oh! some tramp, I conclude," said his uncle, "who had gained access to the grounds, and was peering through the drawing-room window when Christine and I went round the last thing; but you have a look round this morning, it hasn't snowed in the night, and any fresh footmarks will be plainly visible."

"Oh, certainly!" replied the young man, laughing. "We'll mark her little footsteps in the snow; but we must look sharp, Christine, for I start for London by the 1.30 train from Brompton, and it is now twelve."

"Going to London again?" pouted Christine. "What a shame, and I wanted you to skate with me on the lake; the ice is as firm as a rock and since that wretched Captain Lipscombe ran away with Adeline Borun I have no friends at all, as they were the only girls I could mix with here, and now Mr. Borun won't let them come near 'The Olives.'"

"Then let them keep away," growled the old man, as Maurice nervously pulled his moustache first one side and then the other, whilst his face changed from red to white, and from white to red; but making a pretence to read the morning paper shielded him from observation. And when Christine had finished her breakfast he asked if she was ready—he would accompany her over the grounds.

The noonday sun had obliterated any sign that might have been. There were black holes in the white snow leading to the window

specified by Christine, but whether they were the footprints of man, woman, or beast, it was impossible to decide further than that they proceeded from a small side gate, through which only the servants of the household were supposed to enter.

"It must have been someone connected with the kitchen," said Maurice; "or most likely, as uncle suggests, a tramp. I should say the latter, as the holes, you see, are in a double row, returning to the same point. But what is this?" he asked, stooping to raise a handkerchief from the ground.

It was a pocket-handkerchief of fine cambric, with raised letters worked at the corner by a woman's hand. It was all that either cared to see of it, as, kicking it on one side, they continued their walk to the borders of the lake. Christine thinking it strange that tramps should leave handkerchiefs of such quality behind them, whilst Maurice was considering the fleeting moments as they passed rapidly away.

"I must be off now, Christine," he said at last, "as it is a good two miles to the station, and it is half-past twelve already, and the state roads are in now it will take us an hour to get there."

"All right," replied Christine; "if you are determined to leave me, I suppose you will," and she turned to accompany him back to the house, where the groom was already in waiting with the trap which was to convey him to the station.

"Good-bye, Maurice," said his uncle, "I shall be glad to see you back soon, and don't forget what I was speaking of last evening."

There is no fear of that, thought Maurice, as, taking the reins in one hand, he waved an adieu to Christine with the other, and soon appeared only as a dark speck in the distance as he urged the horse forward over the snowy road.

A few hours later and he alighted at the station of the Great Eastern, where, instead of the solitary porter who opened the door of his carriage at the little village terminus, here all was bustle and confusion.

The day had closed in although but a little past four, and parents were anxiously awaiting the different boxes as they were taken from the luggage-van to pounce upon the particular property of their respective children, who with several others were assembled on the platform, their little faces all aglow with pleasure and excitement at the prospect of the Christmas holidays, for which they had returned from school; and as cab after cab rolled out laden with a merry group, it was some time before Maurice could obtain one to convey him to his destination.

The streets were so slippery that it was with difficulty, when he had obtained his object, that the horse could keep his feet on the asphalt, which shone beneath the gas-light like a sheet of glass.

The drivers declared they had never in their time known such hard weather so early in the season, and the horses thought the City had never been so cruel before as they fell one after another on the flinty ground, but beyond their value the latter were little studied as they struggled on with their heavy loads, hot in their endeavour to keep a footing.

Once away from the sound of Bow bells travelling became easier, and when Maurice alighted at Bedford-place it was still early.

A young girl opened the door, a miserable, half-fed looking girl, who seemed worn out with the hard work she was called upon to do; but as she closed the door when Maurice had paid and dismissed the cabman, a shrill voice was heard from the kitchen inquiring who it was.

"A gentleman for the drawing-rooms, ma'am," was the reply, which brought the landlady to the hall, where Maurice still waited.

"I do not require apartments, madam," he said. "I am Mr. Davering. My wife, I believe, is here."

"Oh, Mrs. Davering! yes, sir. That stupid

girl drags me up a dozen times a-day when there is no necessity," and railing against servants in general, and the poor little thing in question in particular, Mrs. Ollyet led the way to the drawing-room.

It was a large room with three windows opening on to a balcony; the furniture was scanty, and, with the exception of antimacassars, no attempt at ornamentation was made on the part of the owner of the house, the few nick-nacks and choice flowers being placed there by the occupier. The same was sitting by the fire as Maurice entered, engaged on some needlework, as, with her foot on a bassinette, she gently rocked it to and fro.

The curtains of the windows were closely drawn, the gas was alight, and it was a pretty picture of home comfort that he looked upon as the door closed behind him.

The face that bent over the work was that of a girl scarcely nineteen. She was very fair. On her white forehead the dead gold hair rested, whilst in contrast her eyes were a deep hazel, with jet black lashes, and brows dark and arched. She was singing a soft lullaby to the infant at her feet, until the opening door and the appearance of Maurice drew from her a cry of joy, and rising from the seat she had occupied she threw herself into his arms.

"Oh! why didn't you write to tell me you were coming?" she asked, as after divesting himself of his overcoat Maurice sat down by her side.

"Because I thought to surprise my darling," he replied, as he tenderly kissed the upturned face. "Are you not glad to see me?"

"Glad! oh, so glad!" she said, as she nestled close to him. "Oh! Maurice, when shall we always be together, dear! It is so lonely through the long, long hours, and no one to speak to."

"But you have baby," said Maurice, as he looked to the cradle.

"I know," replied the girl, "but baby can't talk just yet, dear, you know," and she laughed. "But hasn't he grown a beauty?" and she turned down the coverlet that Maurice might more plainly see the supposed beauties of the sleeping infant.

"Yes, he is a fine little fellow, but don't wake him," he said, as the fine little fellow commenced drawing his face into every form of contortion preliminary to a cry, which had the contrary effect than of adding to the charms of which his proud young mother had so lately boasted.

"But you must be hungry, dear," said the latter, as, the baby having changed his mind and gone to sleep again, she rang the bell.

"Bring up the tea directly," she said, as the girl answered the same, "and ask Mrs. Ollyet to let me have a nice steak grilled; mind, Ann, not fried."

It was some time before the order was obeyed. During the preparation a loud discussion was going on between misus and maid, which, as chief of it took place on the staircase, was quite audible in the other parts of the house.

"I shall leave you to-morrow," said Ann, as she rattled the plates on the tray. "I can't stand it no longer, I can't."

"Go on up," replied Mrs. Ollyet, "and let me have no more of your cheek. If you leave before your time's up you won't have a farthing out of me, nor a character either, mind that."

"Well, but why don't you give me something to eat?" asked the girl.

"Something to eat! well, that's good, that is; and here you have been and eaten all the lodger's cold meat 'a' most," said Mrs. Ollyet, as she faced Ann with the gridiron, from which she had just taken the steak.

She was a big woman, and the girl, knowing her temper, beat a hasty retreat, taking the tray, as she was bid, and waiting until she reached the upper stair, when calling out loud enough for the whole house to hear,—

"Well, if you don't feed me the lodgers must," she ascended to the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Davering awaited her. "What is the matter, Ann?" asked the latter, "you and Mrs. Ollyett seem to be having high words."

"Yes! mum, I never came anear such a place in my life; it is enuff to make a gal down herself, it is; work, work, jaw, jaw, and nothin' to eat," and the gal burst into tears as she recited her miseries, the end of which Maurice thought he should never hear, when two or three bells setting up a simultaneous clang, he slipped half-a-crown into her hand, and told her to go, or she would get into further trouble.

For some time after the table had been cleared, Maurice and his girl-wife sat by the cheerful fire, there was so much to talk of, so much to tell in the present, and such hopes of happiness to build up for the future that the passing hours were little heeded by either.

"And you say, dear, that your uncle still persists that unless you marry Miss Audriene he will leave you without a penny; don't you think he would relent if you were to tell him that you were married already?" she asked, as she looked up into the face bending so fondly near her own.

"You don't know my uncle, Birdie, as I do," he replied. "No, he would send me from his door a beggar; he belongs to the old school, darling, brooking no questioning of his will, and exacting the same obedience from me now as when I was a little fellow in petticoats and wore strapped shoes. We must wait patiently, darling, until I can see a way out of the difficulty; for my sake, for baby's sake, you will be patient, won't you?" and he drew her head on his shoulder as he passed his hand caressingly over her gold brown hair.

"Yes, dear, I will; but tell me, Maurice, do you ever see them now? It is for their sake, not mine, darling, I seem impatient. I know how poor mother has suffered, myself looked upon as dead, who used to be the one more petted than the rest, her favourite as I was, and it is the pain I have caused her which is the one bitter drop in my cup of happiness."

"Birdie," he said, suddenly, "come weal, come weal, before the bells ring in a new year I will proclaim you my own dear wife. If worse comes to worse I can but work for you, darling, and I shall be ever with you, but it may not be so bad after all. What do you say?"

"That I love you dearer than ever," replied the girl, as she fondly returned the kiss he gave.

And Birdie laid her head on the pillow that night happier than she had been for months, as in her dreams she once again saw the little line of scarlet as it wended its way across the snowy fields to the village church beyond, and in her sleep she heard again, as in her childhood's days, the early morning greetings of the village choir, as they sang beneath the Rectory windows:—

"As shepherds watched their flocks at night," And then again, in her fancy, the merry peals rang out the Christmas Chimes.

(To be continued.)

UNFINISHED.

To lay aside a task once undertaken demonstrates a sad lack of perseverance and energy. If found to be unworthy of the labour effaced, and commence anew; for with what mute reproach will it meet our eyes some future day!

Perhaps 'tis an unfinished sketch, a little group of field-flowers to be represented; but they dropped and withered ere we had application to seize their frail beauty.

Or, it may be, some stray article is sought in one of those dim receptacles for "odds and ends"—an incomplete and forgotten piece of fancy-work is brought to light. Its tediousness had become wearisome, and it was flung aside for some newer pursuit.

Surely it was not always thus. Our great-grandmothers were more persevering, or how could those marvels of exhaustless patience and countless stitches have been handed down as heirlooms through two or three generations.

But nowadays one "craze" so rapidly succeeds another that an average lifetime would be insufficient for all that is undertaken.

What a contrast is seen in the vast realm of nature! And upon this subject a few lines from an author little known out of his own land may be quoted; the beauty of his thought must be the excuse for the extract's length:—

"Who ever sat up late enough at night, or rose long enough before the sun in the morning, to find anything unfinished? Who ever detected anywhere a leaf half-fashioned, or a flower half-painted? A brush's careless trail on some little thing that peeps out of the cleft of a rock, and dodges back again at a breath—some little thing of no consequence that no one, perhaps, ever sees? Ah, no, as delicately finished, fashioned and perfumed, as if it had bloomed in the conservatory of a queen, and had been destined for the wreath that encircles her brow."

Unfinished! The word seems to breathe the fallibility of human purpose; so weak, so vain, even when strengthened by the power of Love and Truth!

We recall Evangeline's sad story,—

"Something there was in her life incomplete, imperfect unfinished;

As if a morning of June, with all its music and sunshine,

Suddenly paused in the sky, and fading, slowly descended

Into the east again."

Well-chosen were those last, briefly-written words of Sir Walter Raleigh—the words of the apostle: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me on that day." E. A.

TEACUP LORE.

Pictures in a teacup? Well, the idea is not altogether a new one, and many of my little friends have, no doubt, tried the old-fashioned plan of making pictures, or, as I think it is called, "telling fortunes," in a teacup.

In fact, I have a friend who is quite renowned for her success as a fortune-teller, through her skill in shaking and tapping a teacup until the grounds, or tea-leaves, in the bottom of the teacup assume, in a rude way, certain shapes or forms representing people, animals, and various other images which she professes to understand as referring in some way to the person whose fortune she happens to be telling at the time.

I was present once when she told, in this way, the fortune of a young lady. The prophecy and the method of making it seemed to me to be very vague; but the gist of it all was, that in a short time a young gentleman of extremely prepossessing appearance would arrive, and that he was, in some unexplained way, to exert a powerful influence on the future prospects of the young lady.

Wishing to discover what there was in the cup to warrant such a forecast, I obtained possession of it without being observed. In the bottom of the cup I saw that the tea-leaves had assumed a form which, with a little aid of the imagination, might be accepted as resembling a very spare, delicate, and altogether dilapidated young man.

With the aid of a teaspoon, and using a few other grounds or leaves that were lying on the bottom of the cup, I quickly changed the young man into a most disreputable-looking old tramp, with a big bundle on his back, and accompanied by a ferocious-looking bull-dog. Then I awaited the result.

Presently, the young lady whose fortune had been foretold, took up the cup, with a blush of

pleasure, to examine its contents. The moment she saw the dreadful figure of the old tramp she exclaimed, "What a horrid old fright!"

Then there was a great commotion, which was only quelled when I acknowledged my guilt. But I had learned something, which was that, with a little management and a teaspoon, pictures of many kinds could be made in a teacup.—*St. Nicholas.*

A HOLIDAY FOR THE WIFE.

GIVE your wife a vacation. She needs one. Little cares are harder to be borne than great responsibilities; and she has many more little cares than her husband, and sometimes as great responsibilities.

The doctors tell us that more women break down mentally than men; and they also tell us that this is because they have more cares to carry and have to carry them continuously.

When your work is done you can lock it up in your office and put the key in your pocket. But she never locks her work up till sleep comes and turns the key upon it. "A woman's work is never done." And modern life has increased and intensified it.

Cares have multiplied faster than conveniences. Life is more complex; its demands are greater and more numerous; society more exacting.

The home keeper must be an artist in dress; a chemist of the kitchen; a sanitary engineer; a domestic doctor; a lady of literary culture; an executive officer skilful to compensate for the defects of poor service; an ornament and a light in society. Who needs a vacation if she does not?

And she cannot get it at home. The more quiet and restful the home is to you the more evidence that it is a care, if not a burden to her. If you see no friction, it is because she is so skilful an engineer. If you see no machinery, it is because she makes it run so smoothly.

A housekeeper can no more take a vacation in her home than a merchant in his counting-house. The better rest your home affords you, the more her need of rest. How long have you been married? How long since she has had a vacation? How long since she has had a night when she had not to see that the children were safe in bed? Or a morning when she had not to see that breakfast was provided for you and them?

Even though her absence occasion considerable inconvenience to you, try to give your wife an occasional vacation.

DREAMS, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambition is merely the shadow of a dream. And I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but a shadow's shadow.

A PRETTY ALBUM.—Among new fancies is the leaf album. To make one only requires the exercise of a little care and patience. First get a slab of plate glass and spread upon it a dab of printer's ink; then get a small roller such as printers use, and roll it over the ink till the glass is equally covered; then lay the leaf—clean and freshly gathered—on the inked glass, and carefully draw the roller over it. Next lift the leaf by the stalk—using considerable tenderness because of the fragility of the subject—and place it between a folded sheet of paper; press and rub gently all over it, being careful not to let it alter its position. Then take the leaf out and you have a beautiful, clean impression of both the front and back. The same effect might be got to a certain extent with lamp-black, oil-colour, or anything of that kind, but when it is done with printing ink it is not only far more clear and distinct, but permanent. A bit of common plate glass, or a bit of marble, or even a china palette, will suffice to put the ink upon—anything, in fact, so long as it presents a smooth surface, is non-metallic and non-absorbent.

THE HEIRESS OF BEAUDESERT.

CHAPTER XIX.

IS IT AN ASSIGNATION?

"Come out for a drive, Valerie! It is quite chilly in the house, but outside the sunshine is delightful."

The Earl of Beaudesert had become anxious about his daughter once again. She had grown nervous and fanciful; and that morning, when a lovely bunch of lilacs, tied up with white satin ribbon, had been sent to the hotel for Lady Valerie De Montfort, she had turned from it with a shudder.

"I would rather stay at home," looking out of the window with frightened eyes, as if she expected to see a ghost there. "You know I am going to the ball to-night, and I don't want to tire myself."

"A drive won't tire you—quite the reverse; so put on your bonnet, and I'll order the carriage."

"Oh please not, papa. I really mean it," looking so desperately in earnest that he had no choice but to give in.

"If this goes on I must take her away again," he thought to himself, with a sigh, as a few minutes later he strolled along the cheerful streets. "I wonder if the opera was too much for her nerves? Something upset them last night, that is certain. Poor child, she looks quite miserable."

To occupy his time he went into the Chamber of Deputies to hear a debate, and was amused at the excitement of the speakers, and the little attention that was paid to the president's jingling bell. The whole scene was utterly unlike a decorous English Parliament, though decorum even with us has grown out of date, and few people care to bridle their tongues with discretion. The debate lasted a long while, because a grey-headed man had possessed himself of the tribune, whom nobody felt inclined to hear, but he was determined to keep to his post until he had disburthened his mind of a carefully-prepared speech. Lord Beaudesert wondered if it would end in their taking him away by force, for several had already got so far as to shake their fists at him; but he grew tired of listening to constant noisy interruptions, and left them to fight it out as they liked best.

On the way back to his hotel he met the Marquis and Lord Marshall, just coming to leave the bouquet of Belton roses for Lady Valerie. They naturally inquired after her with interest, and were told that she looked pale and out of spirits, "so I thought it best to leave her alone. I asked her to come for a drive, but she didn't care about it."

"No use taking anyone out if they don't like it," said the Marquis, sympathizingly.

"I should never leave her alone," remarked Lord Marshall—with such earnestness that Daintree looked round at him in surprise. He saw the look, and began to stammer. "Dull, you know—nobody to speak to—women like company."

"Not all women; but come in and see if you can cheer her up. Perhaps Daintree's roses will have the desired effect." So saying, having reached the hotel, he led them up to his own apartments on the second floor, and opening the door of the salon, asked them to walk in. To his surprise, Lady Valerie was not there. He rang the bell for Beaumont, but a polite waiter appeared, who said that the valet had gone out. He asked for Susan, and the man went off at once to look for her, but after staying away for a long time he came back to say that "Mademoiselle Susanne was not to be found. The hall-porter had seen her go out on foot with miladi."

"Very extraordinary!" said the Earl, "I thought she had quite determined to stay at home."

"No doubt an end of ribbon was wanted for her dress to-night; women can't resist the pleasure of shopping in Paris."

"Valerie doesn't care for that sort of thing," still looking grave; "she's not like other girls."

"Shall we go and look for her?" asked Lord Marshall, with suppressed eagerness.

"No use in that, when we don't know what direction she has taken. It is so very late for her to be out. She never stays out after dusk unless I am with her."

The two friends went away, the Marquis leaving the bouquet of roses on the table. It was a great disappointment to him, for he had meant to place them in Lady Valerie's own small hand. When they got outside he stopped still, and looked at the Viscount searchingly.

"What have you got in your head?"

"Nothing," said the other, irritably; "I'm sick to death of your nonsense."

"Don't put yourself out," soothingly; "but just tell me the truth. Do you think that anything's up?"

"I don't understand you. Surely a girl may go out for a walk with her maid, without kicking up such a rumpus."

"Nobody wants to kick up a rumpus," very quietly. "Her father was surprised—so were you—I saw you turn as red as fire, and then go as white as your own collar—so you needn't deny it. Do you know where she has gone?"

"Not I; how could I?"

"Do you know where she is likely to be?"

"No, of course not. This is too absurd."

"If you don't know, let us divide and prewl about for the next half-hour—meeting here when the time is up. Perhaps you will light upon her if I don't."

"All right, I've no objection to a stroll, and I'll keep my eyes open; but of course she will be in a carriage, and we shall both miss her."

They separated, Lord Marshall, angry with himself for having betrayed his own anxiety, Lord Daintree equally disturbed in mind, though he would have been puzzled to give a reason. He walked on deep in thought, jostling against the passers-by, who set him down with a shrug of their shoulders as "a rude Englishman." During the last few days his heart had gone out completely to the simple girl who charmed him at once with her open, sunny nature, and bewitching ways. She was no hardened coquette, trying her best to catch a coronet, but a pure-minded gentlewoman, always bent upon being courteous and kind to her father's guests, and ready to treat the Marquis of Daintree as an old friend, because the Earl had known him ever since his boyhood.

Neither his rank nor his fortune would influence her, but if he could only do something noble by which to win her respect, perhaps affection would follow, and love tread closely on its footsteps.

Miss Springold had insinuated that there was "something" in the background with a woman's vagueness, and all a pretty girl's spite, but he did not believe a word of it. One look into Valerie De Montfort's eyes was sufficient to tell anyone but a fool that she was pure as a babe that has never left its mother's arms.

Thinking over these things deeply, as was his wont, and only giving hurried glances at the roadway when a carriage passed, he found himself in a narrow street where he had never been before. It was badly lighted, and the pavement was far from clean. Altogether it had rather a disreputable air, and the people who were loitering about it seemed to belong to that class which resembles the owl in its habits.

"The sooner I get out of this the better," he thought to himself, as he wondered how he had come there; "this would be a fine gutter out of which to pick such a diamond!" He walked on, briskly attracted by some lamps at the end, which seemed to belong to a well-lighted thoroughfare. He could not identify it at the moment, but he supposed he should when he reached it.

On his way he was surprised to pass two horses—a dapper looking groom was on one,

and leading the other, a remarkably fine-looking chestnut.

"Evidently the owner of the chestnut has gone to a rendezvous, and wishes to keep his horses out of sight," and the Marquis smiled contemptuously, as if he had never done such a thing in his life.

He was passing a church further on, and he cast a glance up at its arched windows, illuminated by faint rays from some shrine behind the old grey walls darkened by age. He thought of the days when he was a little boy, and his mother used to take him by the hand and lead him to church. It was not often now that he darkened its doors, but if he married Valerie De Montfort he would turn over a new leaf, and make himself fitter to go through life by an angel's side. Even as he thought it his heart gave a bound, for he heard the soft, sweet voice which he had meant to lure him heavenward! He stopped still, and his heart seemed to stop at the same time; framed in the arch of the grey stone porch was the figure of Valerie De Montfort. The light of a lamp fell full on her face, which was deathly pale, and tears were streaming down her cheeks, as she pleaded as if for her life. She was standing wrapped in a seakins on the top of the steps, and a man with a perfectly chiselled profile, which seemed familiar to him, and eyes that glowed with ardent passion, was on a lower step, holding her hands in his?

"A pair of lovers—as any fool could see!" Lord Daintree turned away with a sickening sense of disappointment, and retraced his steps, his head bent down, his gait uncertain, and very unlike his usual firm tread. "Women were all alike," he thought savagely, "and none but a lunatic would trust them." Still he must do his best not to betray her secret, and to keep Marshall off the scent; so he walked back again to the hotel where they had agreed to meet, and tried his hand at dissembling.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRESIDENT'S BALL.

"Well?" said Lord Marshall eagerly, as he threw away his cigar. "Have you had any luck?"

"None at all," answered the Marquis promptly, and as he felt with strict veracity. "I begin to think we are a couple of fools."

"So do I; let us go home," said the Viscount, thoroughly tired of his detectiveship—and home they went.

"Shall I ever be able to meet her and find nothing had happened?" the Marquis asked himself more than once, as he studied his rather plain face with more attention than usual, and discovered that it looked flabby about the cheeks, and heavy about the eyes. He smiled grimly as he saw Phillips, his valet, contemplating him with surprise, and had no doubt "the fellow" thought his master was growing conceited.

The ball that night was a great success, for half the fashionable world of Paris was there, and a good many distinguished foreigners had been invited by the President.

There were the most exquisite dresses that Worth could devise, and pretty faces to do honour to elegant toilettes; brilliant uniforms, and orders by the hundred—diamonds flashing—wit sparkling—and bright eyes shining—bands that made the hearts of young and old beat faster, floors that seemed to invite eager feet to fly, and flowers sufficient to have filled a score of Covent gardens.

Lady Valerie De Montfort looked very well that night, and the excitable Frenchmen bowed down before her beauty as if she were a goddess.

The Marquis of Daintree felt his cheeks pale with emotion. She had his roses in her well-gloved hand, and her eyes had sought his with a grateful smile the moment she entered the room, and yet he leant against the wall, and checked his first impulse to hurry forward.

"What has come over you?" asked Lord

Marshall excitedly; "I'd have given a thousand pounds for that look she gave you."

"Much good it would have done you," with a sardonic smile.

"How you do harp upon that!" he exclaimed testily; "as if I were the only married man in the world."

"Pon my word, I had forgotten Lady M. as much as you had; but what's the worth of a woman's smile when you can't bottle it up, and keep it to yourself?"

"Oh, if that's your line of thought I only hope you won't get another," said the Viscount moved off to see what his reception would be.

Daintree followed, although he felt as if he would rather stay away; and as he shook hands and heard her sweet voice thanking him, and telling him that the roses from Belton were finer and infinitely nicer than those in her former bouquets, he almost thought he must have dreamt that meeting or parting—which was it?—in the church porch.

There was an eager look in her eyes, a deeper flush than usual on her cheeks, but the face was as frank as ever, and surely the innocence had not vanished!

Later on in the evening they danced together, that is to say, they took a turn or two, and lounged against first one wall, and then another, after the fashion of our compatriots. In spite of the size of the rooms they were much crowded, and the ladies were complaining bitterly of their torn dresses, whilst the gentlemen remarked to each other that they were sure, whatever the colour of the outside uniform might be, the inside was black and blue.

"Why do you look so like that?" asked Valerie, with embarrassing directness, after a long pause, during which her partner seemed to have been lost in thought.

"Why? What do you mean?" taken aback. "Your eyes had a sort of pitying look in them as if I were a lamb on the way to slaughter. Is anything dreadful going to happen to me?" with a smile.

"Heaven forbid," with sudden seriousness. The careless smile vanished from her lips, a startled look came to her eyes, she lowered her voice to a whisper.

"You know something—tell me, it would be much kinder."

He stopped a moment thinking.

"What could I know, Lady Valerie?" he said slowly.

"How can I tell?" in great agitation. "Don't keep me in suspense. Has anything happened to—?"

Of course she was alluding to that handsome fellow she had parted from that evening in the dusk. She loved him, that was very evident, and she would not be so frightened about him—a woman was always nervous about the safety of anyone who was dear to her.

He determined to draw the truth out of her if he could, but he knew that he was a clumsy hand at that sort of thing, and had no confidence in his own powers.

"To your father? He was in close confab with the President just now, and I saw nothing dangerous about them."

"You are playing with me," she said impatiently. "Of course papa is all right. I was not thinking of him."

"You might save time if you would tell me whom you were thinking of," very slowly, with his eyes fixed on the crimson flush that instantly dyed her cheeks.

"Why should you tease me? You have heard something—I never knew you cruel before," her chest heaving.

"Heaven knows I would be of service to you if I could," his voice grave and sad. "I have nothing to tell you that you don't know already; but I'm an old friend"—growing confused, "and I know you'll hate me."

She looked up at him with expectant eyes. "Not likely."

"If you have a secret tell it to your father, or some man you can trust."

He paused, then braced himself up, and went on hurriedly. "You are young, and know no-

thing; but secrets like yours play the deuce with a girl's reputation."

He was very red in the face by the time he had ended, and almost held his breath, expecting to be annihilated by an indignant flush, but none came. The small head drooped, one hand played nervously with the roses in her bouquet. There was a long pause, and then she said, faintly,—

"Take me out of this crowd—I am suffocating."

He gave her his arm, and feeling as if he had been a brute or a savage, led her away hastily into a smaller reception-room, now deserted, as hundreds of the guests were pouring through every open door into the supper room.

She sank down on a sofa with a sigh of relief, as if weary in body as well as mind, her lips trembling, her lashes resting on her white cheeks.

The Marquis's heart bled for her. Who was he that he should judge her? No saint assuredly, and yet he could not bear that this girl should not be entirely faultless. He was not much better than other men, but he had a high standard for women which few could reach, and till this afternoon he fancied that Valerie De Montfort had surpassed it.

Would she explain it away?—till him after the fashion of so many romances that the suspected lover was a brother whose the world knew nothing of, and claim his help for the unfortunate wretch? But the man whom he had seen on the church-step looked the very reverse of an unfortunate wretch, with his thoroughbreds waiting round the corner. Finding that theory would not hold water he decided that he was a designing villain, who had got some hold on this innocent girl through no fault of her own, and would lead her into trouble, if not worse than that.

"Tell me the scoundrel's name!" he broke out impulsively, "and I'll undertake to smash his head."

She gave him one look of horrified astonishment, then began to shake from head to foot, clasping her hands together, as if in anguish of mind. A dreadful fear came over him, and his own cheek was white, as he sat down by her side.

"Lady Valerie, what is it?"

"Nothing—nothing that you can cure," she gasped—"only if you ever cared a bit for me, prove it by holding your tongue."

"I will. You can depend on me;" and she knew that the Marquis of Daintree's promise was as good as an oath.

"Thank you; you are a true friend. I knew I could trust you," stretching out a hand, which he took in his, and raised reverently to his lips. "But what will you think of me?" looking up into his honest face with the simplicity of a child. "I don't want you to think badly of me."

"I couldn't," in a choked voice. "Oh, Valerie, listen, dear! You mayn't mean any harm, but you don't know what you may be drawn into. If the man were honest he would bite his tongue off before he proposed an engagement in a church. He would watch over you, and not tempt you; he would care for your honour as for his own hopes of salvation. But on the face of it this fellow's a blackguard—a thorough-paced scoundrel—and mark my words, if you don't cast him off, and send him about his business, you will rue it to your dying day, and cover your father's ancient name with shame. You think I know nothing about it, but I do. I knew the world before you were out of your cradle. I know what men are, and what becomes of the girls who trust them too far; and rather than see you sink as other women have sunk and gone under, I could find it in my heart to kill you—yes, to kill you, in spite of your lovely face, and the love that is driving me wild!"

"Hush! don't talk like that!" a quiver of pain passing over her features.

"But I must," hoarsely, carried out of his usual phlegmatic self by the violence of his feelings. "It is Heaven's truth, and I'm resolved you shall know it."

There was a long pause, whilst from the distant ball-room came a strain of pathetic music, the cadence of a waltz by Strauss.

He thought she was hopelessly offended, and had just made up his mind to leave her there, and send Lord Marshall to fetch her away, when she looked up at him, tears shining in her beautiful eyes.

"I shall never forget this, Daintree. Be my friend, and I shall have nothing to fear."

With a suppressed cry of delight he caught her little hands in his huge ones, and kissed them passionately.

"Your friend till death!" and at that moment he was so carried away by his enthusiasm, that he would gladly have laid down his life for her, without an instant's hesitation, if he could by that means have secured the happiness of her future, and averted the misfortune which his practised eye foresaw.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ENGLISH ROSE.

"Your daughter has been the star of the evening, m'lord," said the President's wife, as the Earl came up to make a parting speech. "She has thrown all our native beauties into the shade."

"There is no shade where Madame G. lives," and he bowed over her proffered hand.

"Really that Englishman pays pretty speeches as well as any Frenchman," turning to a friend, with a pleased smile.

"No wonder; his daughter's face is enough to inspire him. Is it true that she is going to marry the Marquis?"

"No, I saw her yawn when she was dancing with him."

"That is no evidence against the marriage—that is to say, it would not be with us. I know one man who fell asleep when his contract was being signed."

"Yourself probably? But then you can sleep through a thunderstorm."

"Yes, and, better still, I can go fast asleep when my wife is scolding. Where is Perpignan now?"

"I don't know, but his *filus Achates* is over here, so I don't suppose he can be far off."

"Ah! I wonder what mischief is brewing?" with his finger to the side of his nose.

"Some say it's the little English girl," dropping her voice to a mysterious whisper; "but I hope it is a false report."

"What's the evidence—stronger than the yawn?"

"They sat in Perpignan's box at the opera—and everybody knows that, it's left in his hands. And then Fanchette tells me that every day of the week he sends a lovely bouquet to the hotel where they are staying."

"And how does Fanchette know?" with the air of a sceptic.

"Because she is going to marry Antoine Marot, one of the waiters."

"Well, it may be true. I can't say; but if it ever comes off it will give the gossips something to talk about—virtue and vice, simplicity and intrigue, &c. Hasn't the girl got eyes to see it all written on his cursed face?"

He turned away without waiting for an answer, and mixed with the crowd, who made way respectfully for him because he was a grandee, and laughed at him behind his back, because the Parisians are given to ridicule.

"Ah! Darrell, you here! I only just arrived? I imagine that you have missed the very persons you came to see."

"Not at all, monsieur," said the Englishman haughtily, "I have come to speak a few words to the President, and he is scarcely likely to retire before his guests are considerate enough to leave him in peace."

"This is no time for business; put your cares into your pocket, and ask the prettiest girl you can find to dance."

"The prettiest has gone; I met her on the steps, and dancing has no temptations for me."

"Then pray dance, and the rest of the



[A TERRIBLE DISAPPOINTMENT.]

world will be safe, at least for a quarter-of-an-hour."

The Colonel looked down his aristocratic nose with a haughty stare. "May I ask your meaning?"

"Better not," with a shrug of his shoulders. "I talk nonsense generally when I'm not at work."

"Fortunate that you are known to be one of the busiest men in Paris, or your wit would be too much for us."

"Au revoir, Colonel; I remember that my work will be waiting for me if I don't make haste home."

The two men parted, each with a consciousness of secret enmity, for which neither perhaps could have given a sufficient reason.

Colonel Darrell made his way to the President without any great difficulty, but he found that it was utterly impossible to get a minute's private conversation with him, whilst his hand was being shaken off in parting greetings by all those who considered themselves entitled to the privilege.

He swore beneath his black moustaches, but that did no good at all; the stream of humanity in gorgeous array still went on, and left him waiting on the brink. Apparently his affairs were of great importance, at least to himself, for a dark frown settled on his face, and he began to gnaw his underlip, as he usually did when nearly wild with impatience. At last he gave it up as hopeless, and walking away, sauntered through the rooms, chatting with any friends whom he happened to come across.

He presently espied a yellow rosebud lying forgotten on the carpet. Some instinct made him stop and pick it up. A young Viscount Duchâtel, who knew him well, touched him on the arm.

"Give it to me. It is of no value to you, but I shall treasure it like a jewel!"

"Then you know who dropped it?" with a satirical smile.

"Yes, the English girl, whom everyone is raving about. She had them in her bouquet,

and though I asked for one, and nearly knelt on the floor, she would not give it me."

"You don't mean Lady Valerie?"

"Who else? Is there anyone in Paris to compare with her?"

"But I think you are mistaken; her bouquet was of lilies."

"It was of roses, and they came from some place in England. That little fat English miller gave them to her."

"There is no mistake—you are quite sure?"

looking at him intently.

"As sure as that I stand here," impatiently. "So give me the rosebud."

"Not I," holding it out of reach, "if it belongs to her it belongs to me."

"To you?" looking bewildered; "I had no idea—"

"You never have," with cold contempt. "Listen, but don't prate about it all over Paris. As sure as your name is Duchâtel, and mine Darrell, Valerie De Montfort will one day be my wife."

The Frenchman stared at him open-mouthed, but a broad-shouldered Englishman, who had overheard the last words accidentally, said in a low voice,—

"I am much obliged to you for the information, though I venture to doubt its accuracy."

Colonel Darrell started as if he had been stung, but when he turned to identify the speaker he was already lost in the crowd. Duchâtel had also moved off, having been beckoned away by a friend, so he had no resource but to watch everyone who was leaving the large ball-room, or to go home with his curiosity unsatisfied. As the former was a tedious process, which did not suit his fiery, impatient disposition, he chose the latter alternative.

He reached his sumptuous lodgings in a bad temper, and asked the sleepy porter who opened the door if there were any telegrams for him in such a gruff voice that the man uttered his negative laconically, and slunk out of his way.

"That fool Zebedee, what good is he doing at Vienna, I should like to know!" he grumbled savagely, as he hurried over his letters with a hasty hand. "Does he think I've paid his journey, in order that he may watch over Verreker's safety? Ah! what's this?"—running his eye over a page of almost illegible writing—"broken his arm—bad luck to him, he's always doing himself a damage—despatches arrived last night—knows where he keeps them. Good, that's better—Verreker will be a lost man—bravo, little Zebedee—I never knew you fail me yet," and his eyes glittered with satisfaction. "I should like to see the proud old Earl giving his daughter to a disgraced man!"

He locked his papers in his desk, and lighting a cigarette leant back in his arm-chair to enjoy his meditations.

They were evidently agreeable to him, for the expression of his rather rigid features softened, and a smile hovered about his lips. Presently he drew the yellow rosebud out of his pocket, and looked at it fondly, apostrophising the girl to whom it had once belonged as he pressed the faded flower to his lips.

"Poor little thing! You are as frightened as a bird in a snare, but you can't escape. Love is the only influence that is strong enough to fight against mine, and with Verreker tied by the leg, there will be no one to save you from me. You will like it well enough after a time, for no woman has ever resisted me."

Then he pulled out a telegraphic form, and filled it in, in readiness for the morning, telling Zebedee to be as careful as he could with his intended operations, and promising a magnificent reward. All this was expressed in a cypher intelligible to no one but the man to whom it was addressed, and he shut the missive up in an envelope with a pleased smile, knowing that it was calculated to destroy the happiness of two people, and to secure his own!

(To be continued.)



[FIRST LOVE'S DAWN.]

NOVELETTE.]

HIS DAISY QUEEN.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

"Now, mother mine, I am ready," says Hazel Tressham, standing before her, a perfect poem of beauty, with parted lips and bewitching smiles.

"Why, dear child, you bewilder me," replies Mrs. Tressham, with a proud smile. "You will be the prettiest-dressed girl in the room; but how on earth did you manage on so small a sum as two pounds?"

"By using my wits, and not being the slave of a milliner. Now, confess, like a dear old darling, that I have succeeded well?"

"I do, dear," says her mother, smiling with pleasure at the vision of girlish beauty robed in snowy billows of tulle and clusters of simple daisies, thrown, as it were, by fairy fingers, here, there, and everywhere. They cling around her neck, arms, and peep out shyly from her coils of bronze-hued hair, hiding their pretty heads even in her tiny satin shoes.

"Then you predict a favourable verdict, eh?" she laughs, mischievously. "You unbelieving darling, I know you were on tenterhooks lest I should be a fright, and make you feel uncomfortable."

"No, my dear, that would be impossible; you have too much the artist's soul to be anything but tastefully dressed; but I must admit having been rather dubious on such an important occasion, especially when I knew you had but a paltry sum that I should have laughed at when your dear father was alive; but, really, you look so nice, and I am so pleased, like an old hen over her first chicken, that I had quite forgotten Mr. Bethune brought this lovely bouquet. It is a most exquisite one, too; really he is the essence of good

nature and kindness," taking from a bowl a costly bouquet of white roses and maiden-hair fern.

"That will be perfectly useless to me," she says, indifferently. "My flowers are the simple field ones, not the hothouse, and I have provided a nice bunch, and here it is," taking from the servant a beautiful bunch of daisies, intermixed with delicate fronds of fern.

"It is very pretty, dearest, and in perfect keeping; but will it not appear very unkind to ignore Mr. Bethune's gift, especially as he gave you the tickets?" urges Mrs. Tressham, rather troubled.

"Certainly not, mother, I can explain to-morrow that the flowers were out of keeping with my dress. But, now that I have been duly inspected and approved, let me look at my handsome mate. Why, I declare you look positively lovely," kissing the gentle face tenderly, and arranging with her natural skill the white lace shawl over her mother's shoulders, and buttoning her gloves dexterously.

At last they are off, Hazel with a witching kind of dreamy expectancy in her sapphire eyes that make them sparkle like those rare blue gems they resemble.

The dreamy strains of the "Ehren on the Rhine" waltz are sobbing and sighing through the grand palatial *salon* as Mrs. Tressham and Hazel enter.

"How exquisite!" she whispers softly to her mother. "I never imagined such a fairy scene as this."

"It is, indeed, lovely!" returns Mrs. Tressham, as they make their way through the throng, the perfumed breath of myriads of flowers filling the atmosphere with sweetness; the splash of cool, sparkling fountains mingles with rippling laughter, and all is bright, glowing, and enchanting.

As she floats through the room men's eyes are turned admiringly on the vision of white, and inquiries pass round.

"Who is that lovely girl in the daisy dress? Why, she a veritable queen of beauty!"

And she finds herself besieged by would-be partners pleading for a dance.

She is soon whirling in the bewildering, but fascinating mazes of the waltz, when all at once a flash of pleasure lights up her face as she catches sight of Lord Maudsley.

He evidently recognises her, for there is a bright gleam in his eyes that makes them flash with pleasure, and causes her heart to beat strangely.

"May I ask if your programme is filled?" says a deep musical voice, and standing before her is Lord Maudsley, bowing in a courtly manner.

"I think not," she replies, blushing with sweet confusion, as she hands him the white-and-gold trifle.

"Then I may fill in these three spaces?" he says, eagerly.

"Oh, no!" she replies, archly. "I can only permit you one."

"Would you be so cruel?" he returns, looking at the fairy-like girl in her snowy robes with longing, admiring eyes. "I crave your clemency, fair lady, this once by permitting me the boon of two. You will not refuse me?"

"As you will, then," she replies, with a sweet, winning smile.

"Who was that gentleman whom you just spoke to, dear?" asks Mrs. Tressham.

"Oh, that was Lord Maudsley, mother; the gentleman I mentioned to you last week, who found my purse and restored it to me."

"He is a very distinguished-looking man; but I wonder who the fair girl is in that lovely lilac satin? She is very tall and elegant. See she is talking to that lady in black velvet. I fancy it must be her mother; there is such a resemblance between them."

"I believe she is his fiancée; at least Mr. Bethune said so, but hers he is. And fancy—why, he is one of the stewards! How strange he never mentioned it to us!" as he made his

way towards Hazel, decorated with the white satin badge of office.

A shade of annoyance passes over his dark face as he notices in a moment that Hazel is not carrying his gift of flowers, but in their place a simple posy of daisies.

"May I request the honour of the next dance, Miss Treasham?" he asks.

"I regret I am engaged," she replies, rather nervously; "but here is my programme, and I can grant you the third. You see there is only one vacant."

"You have evidently been besieged by almost an army of partners," he says, biting his lip to repress the irony in his voice. "Will you condescend to take a turn with me round the room. There are some fine specimens of ferns and palms really worth your attention."

In another moment her little gloved hand is placed on his arm, and they slowly pass through the brilliant crowd—she the admirer of all admirers.

Lord Maudsley looked almost enviously at Bethune, and wished he could have escaped from the society of Lady Viola and her mother.

"Why, that is the girl whose purse you found last week, Aubury!" remarks Lady Viola.

"Yes! Is she not very lovely?" he says, rather enigmatically, which brought a frown on Lady Viola's face.

"Well, ex, you, rather I should say," draws her ladyship, adjusting her eye-glass, and bestowing a supercilious scrutiny upon Hazel.

"I cannot endorse your verdict, Aubury," she returns, piqued at his open admiration. "I am sure there are several girls here to-night far prettier than she."

"Well, that may be your opinion," he observes, mischievously; "but evidently the men think otherwise, for they are all crazy after the Daisy Queen."

"You seem as bad as the rest," she says, spitefully, fanning herself violently with her exquisitely jewelled fan, and jeopardising its fragility.

"I do not profess to be better or worse than my compeers," he says, reprovingly. "I always acknowledge the claims of beauty where they are due."

"But tastes differ, Aubury. What you might consider beautiful others would, perhaps, fail to appreciate."

"Then you do not consider my taste is reliable? That is rather strange, considering I chose you this season out of a thousand acknowledged beauties," he says, boldly.

She was fairly vanquished by this daring shaft, and was fain to cast down her steely-blue eyes, as if intent upon some interesting object on the well-worn floor.

"Come," he continues, "do you still say I have no taste, Viola?" he evidently enjoying her confusion—a rare occurrence with the haughty damsel, who, as a rule, was generally at her ease.

"I beg to be excused answering the question," she rejoins, angrily. "I never care to notice people outside my own circle."

Meanwhile the unconscious object of this discussion is continuing her promenade with Mr. Bethune, who ventures to say,—

"I fear I have offended you in some way, Miss Treasham. May I ask why you did not accept my flowers?"

"Because they were not suitable. You see, my dress is trimmed with daisies," she replies, coldly.

"I wish I had known it," he says, "because I would have given you a daisy one instead. Do you know it quite pained me when I saw you had neglected my poor gift?"

"Why?" she asks, innocently.

"Why? Look up into my face; surely you will read your answer?" he says, earnestly. "Do you think it possible that I could live under the same roof as you, meet every day, exchange conversation, and even eat at the same table, without feeling pain when a gift has been neglected?"

"You place too much stress upon a trifle," she observes, coldly, and walking faster towards the dancers; "and the Lancers are about to commence, I see; and here comes my partner," as Lord Maudsley advances.

"Why, how is Bethune?" says his lordship, heartily. "So you are one of the big-wigs here. Well, I congratulate you upon a great success. Will you introduce me?"

"Certainly, Maudsley. Miss Treasham, an old college friend, Lord Maudsley."

"I am sorry to leave you so soon, but we will meet again after supper," as he leads Hazel away to the set just forming.

Somehow her heart seems to leap with a strange joy as she feels herself clasped in his arms, his breath warm and intoxicating, fanning her cheek that is dyed with rosy blushes; her dark lashes lay coyly over her slazy eyes, that are flashing like meteors, and he is scanning the rose-bud face with intense admiration, which she can feel as if by instinct, for she dare not look up and meet those searching eyes. She is afraid lest they should tell her too much, and they go through the intricate mazes of the Lancers in a kind of dreamy ecstasy. Both know that love pure and sweet has entered their lives; she can feel the palpitating of his heart as he whirls her round, and a mad impulse possesses him to keep her there, fast to his breast, his lovely daisy queen.

Although the clash of the last chords tell them their blissful dream is over, and he leads her to an alcove, where a fragrant pyramid of feathery ferns, delicate orchids, and bathous flowers conceal them from the dancers, and the cool splash of a fountain makes the picture complete.

They sit perfectly quiet for some few minutes—that dangerous silence which means more eloquently than words what the tongue dare not utter. At last the stillness is broken by him saying, gently,—

"I am thinking how unfortunate I am to have only two dances, Miss Treasham, and one is over. You are a slytip, I verily believe. I sometimes felt afraid you would fade from my arms; your feet never seemed to touch the floor."

"I trust I am more substantial than that," she replies, archly; "but my mother will be wondering where I am. Had we not better return to the ball-room?"

"It is cooler here and will refresh you after the heat and fatigue," he says, pleadingly; "besides, I have a great favour to ask. Will you grant it?"

"I cannot promise till you tell me what it is," she returns, rather shyly.

"Will you give me that tiny bunch of daisies from your arm?" he says, looking with passionate eyes, full of tender light, into Hazel's face.

"There it is," she says, with pretty confusion, placing it in his hand. "So trifling a favour I grant at once, but I fail to see the use of these simple flowers of the field to you, except you are of an artistic turn of mind and wish to paint them."

"I am rather an artist in my tastes, I admit, though I have never painted a picture," he replies. "These field stars to me will be precious, because they will remind me of the wearer whose friendship commenced to-night, one of the happiest of my whole life. How sad it is time flies so quickly when one is in Elysium!"

"Why, Aubury; you here?" says Lady Viola, in freezing tones. "Are you aware that this is our wait?"

"I really beg your pardon, Viola," his lordship says, apologetically; "permit me to introduce you to Miss Treasham, who was resting awhile after the fatigue of dancing. Miss Treasham, Lady Viola Colver."

"I presume you like secluded corners, Miss Treasham, when tired. Tastes differ so; I prefer light and the society of many," she says, with stinging irony that causes Hazel to burn with indignation.

Throwing back her chestnut head proudly

Hazel looks straight into Lady Viola's cruel, but fair face, and says haughtily,—

"I endorse your opinion, Lady Viola; tastes invariably differ. Some people prefer the glare and garish light of meretriciousness. I am different, I select the shade instead; the violet is coveted frequently before the brighter flowers whose perfume may be sweet, but never lasts as long as the tiny modest violet."

"I presume you are writing a book of poems, Miss Treasham?" she sneers; "but I fancy the field is rather overcrowded with aspirants. Probably it is wise in one sense to commence writing high-flown nonsense, as it must keep you well up in little stock phrases; but you will kindly excuse me now as I hear the band has commenced," taking Lord Maudsley's arm with an air of proprietorship which galled poor Hazel to the quick.

"You forget, Viola," he says, rather sternly, "that Miss Treasham is under my charge, and I must lead her to her friends," offering his other arm, which Hazel takes, and looks with a triumphant smile at the engaged Viola, whose eyes are blazing with suppressed fury and jealousy.

Hazel is quick to note this advantage, and thinks,—

"So you, my lady, have thrown down the gauntlet. I pick it up, and will enter the lists against you. You shall learn that a Treasham is not a slave to an aristocrat."

Had Hazel not been justly incensed by the sneers and contempt of her ladyship, who, because she was the daughter of an earl, thought it incumbent upon her to touch Hazel, she would not have given a second thought to him.

At last the strains of the National Anthem are heard, and the gay crowd is hastening homeward.

"Will you permit me to see you to your carriage?" asks Lord Maudsley, as Hazel is about drawing on her cloak.

"But what have you done with your ladies?" she says in surprise.

"They are on their way home by now," he replies smiling, and offering her his arm.

"I have missed my party in the crush," she remarks secretly, pleased that it is so.

"Pardon me Maudsley," says Bethune, hurrying forward, "I am Miss Treasham's escort."

To Hazel, he adds,—

"Mrs. Treasham is quite anxious about you."

Not liking his tone, she replied,—

"Then pray relieve her anxiety by telling her that I am perfectly safe"—this as she places her little gloved hand on his lordship's arm, who smiles inwardly at Bethune's evident vexation.

"He might have looked after his own party, and not intruded himself upon mine; he is evidently smitten with sweet Hazel. Thank goodness, he can never enter the lists; she is as far from him as the stars that the moists of daybreak are covering," thinks Karl Bethune. "I must warn Mrs. Treasham of his position with Lady Viola; at all events, he shall not enter their home under false colours."

Many were the envious glances from several gentlemen who surrounded the Daisy Queen as she stands, her face all sparkling with excitement, and a new sweet fluttering joy as Lord Maudsley wraps the cloak around her snowy shoulders tenderly, and a delicious, tremulous sensation passes over her frame as his hands come in contact with hers.

Surely it must be an electric current that is passing from his love-attuned fingers that thrills the girl's whole being, and makes her eyes so gem-like in their radiant brilliancy.

CHAPTER II.

"You made quite a conquest last night, Hazel. I almost think you were the belle—at least, I heard many whispers going about to that effect. But, there, I mustn't tell you all the pretty things they said, or perhaps you may get vain," says Mrs. Treasham, smiling.

she pours out the tea at breakfast from the old-fashioned plated teapot, that had to do duty for the handsome silver one of bygone days.

Hazel looks very fresh and pretty in her simple pink gingham frock, as she busies herself cutting delicate slices of bread-and-butter with deft fingers, and taps the eggs to prevent them from getting hard—not at all like a young lady who has only had a few hours' rest after a very fatiguing ball. There was a triumphant smile on her face as she returns,—

"I hope, mother, dear, I may never be vain or conceited, though, I admit, I am gratified to hear that my first ball was a success in every way, because I pleased you; and then, you see, my dress looked nice, and as for partners, why they were legion!"

"There was one gentleman who seemed to show you particular attention—I mean Lord Maudsley. He is a friend of Mr. Bethune, I believe. That young lady in lilac satin looked awfully at you; I noticed her several times. I wonder if she is engaged to him? She is very beautiful, but has a proud, supercilious expression, which mars her face somewhat, in my taste."

"I did not take particular notice of her; she seems cold and overbearing. I do not care for her appearance—she is insipid, to my taste," says Hazel, indifferently; "but we women, I fear, are not impartial judges—eh, mother mine?"

"I cannot endorse your opinion so far as that, my dear, for I know many women who have admitted the charms of their own sex when they refuse to acknowledge it. I always ascribe their tardiness to jealousy, or, in some cases, dislike, and I trust my child will never fall into that unwomanly way of underrating others. Every flower possesses sweetness and beauty individually. There is the lily, rose, camellia—all are beautiful, yet so very different. The lilac lady, as I call her, is the lily in my estimation."

Hazel forebore replying, because Bethune entered, and somehow she fears that he is not altogether pleased with the result of the ball, not that she admitted his right to control her actions.

"What is that I hear about the lily, ladies?" he asks, as he enters the room. "May I be permitted to join the argument?"

"My mother was saying that she considers Lady Viola very lovely," remarks Hazel, as she hands him a cup of tea.

"She is very fair, I admit," he replies, "but was outdone, in fact, fairly eclipsed last night, and she knew it, for she pouted and frowned awfully; but there, she had reason, she was the belle of the London season, and has been made a little queen of wherever she goes."

"You know her, Mr. Bethune?" says Mrs. Tresham, in surprise.

"Oh! yes. Well, and her engagement to Lord Maudsley is the talk of society. She rejected an earl and a duke for him. The duke, by-the-way, was not much of a loss, he being near sixty—still a duke is a duke, and she naturally looks upon Maudsley as her special property, considering she has thrown her handkerchief at his feet."

"Well, he certainly is a very distinguished, handsome man, but a terrible flirt, I should think; for he tried his utmost to get near you, Hazel. She must look sharply after her lover, or he may yet slip through her fingers," says Mrs. Tresham.

And the good lady laughs at her sally, little dreaming how her words wounded the fair girl, who is trying vainly to hide her confusion from the sharp eyes of Bethune, who rejoins,—

"There is little fear of that, for he is in the hands of a family who know how to protect their rights. Maudsley would be a bold man, indeed, to trifle with the beautiful Lady Viola."

Feeling that Bethune's remarks are aimed at her, Hazel excuses herself, and in dusting about endeavours to forget her vexation.

"Lord Maudsley, Miss Hazel," says the housemaid, ushering him right into her young mistress's presence, and bringing a rosy flush into the sweet mignon face as she stands before him, one little hand holding a dusting-brush, the other she holds shyly out by way of greeting.

"Good morning, Miss Tresham," he says, in softly modulated tones; "I hope I am not intruding, and that Mrs. Tresham is well after the fatigue of last night. Yourself I need not ask, for you look as fresh as the morn," gazing with rapt admiration at the supple figure in pink, one tiny knot of carnations at her fair throat, a little slipped foot peeping coyly from her skirt, her rounded bosom palpitating softly with pleasurable emotion as she feels that his eyes are fixed upon her.

Her rich brown hair that the sun is kissing boldly turning it into arrowy sheaves of gold, is gathered in a massive coil at the back of her dainty little head. Altogether she makes a bewitching picture, one that imprisons itself on his mind never to be effaced.

His æsthetic taste was gratified by the thorough simplicity but elegance of Hazel, who offers a striking contrast to Viola, whom he had seen that morning lounging luxuriously in her magnificent boudoir, decked in azure satins and costly laces; but his heart was not in sympathy with hers, although her imperial style of beauty had captivated his tastes till he met Hazel, who combined the rare charm of beauty with simplicity of life and manners, not one atom of affectation being discoverable in her demeanour.

"Thanks, my mother is well, and not over tired," this as she casts a swift glance into those speaking eyes of his which seem to be full of love's magnetism.

"Am I intruding?" he persists, pleadingly, as if afraid lest she should banish him from her sweet presence, and shut him out of paradise; "because if so dismiss me, but I will be very good if you will say stay."

She laughs a little silvery flute-like laugh, which provokes the camary into a rippling song, little wavelets of melody that float around the room.

"As you have promised to be very good I suppose I must not banish you," she says, merrily. "Besides, my mother will be pleased to see you. I am busy, you see"—looking ruefully at her dust-flecked hands.

"Let me help you. I am a splendid duster—indeed, I will do credit if you will try me."

"I have but one brush, and two cannot very well manage with only one," she says, archly, as he tries to imprison the little hand, brush and all, mischievously as if he were a boy again, ready and eager for a game of romps.

Even had he been a man of less keen perception he must have seen that Hazel had a very friendly feeling towards him by permitting the playful liberty he had taken with her. Perfect love casteth out all fear seemed to be idea that floated mysteriously through her mind.

"As you will!" she laughs, in pretty confusion, handing him the coveted prize, which he begins to use rather awkwardly, much to her amusement.

"Don't laugh," he says, bantering. "A bad beginning makes a good ending. I am a knight of the duster, you see, and a sworn enemy to cobwebs and all such intrusive trifles."

After sitting from picture to picture with demonstrative industry he suddenly places the brush down, and says, dazingly,—

"Now I must ask you, fair lady, for my reward, having entered the lists for your sake, and slain ever so many particles of dust."

"Oh! but that is hardly fair!" she says, naively. "You volunteered, you know. A clear conscience and a sense of having performed your duty must be your reward."

"Nay, one likes something more tangible than that," he laughs, disclosing a white set of teeth fringed by a silky, tawny moustache,

his hazel eyes brimful of fun. "May I tell you what I want?"

"Yes, unless you know it would be too hard for me to grant," she observes, somewhat coldly, for there is a look of power in his eyes that makes her half afraid of him.

"Simply to crown my efforts by the gift of those carnations. You see I am modest in my demands, as behoves every knight should be in the presence of beauty."

"But, Sir Knight," she returns, demurely, "I gave you some daisies only last night; have they withered already?"

"No, nor shall they ever," he replies, earnestly, with a ring of passion in his voice that brings a sparkle into her eyes, and a sweet fluttering at her heart which she cannot quite define. "I never knew how beautiful a simple daisy was till last night!"

"Then be content, otherwise these more gaudy ones may supplant the modest daisy."

"No, that can never be," he says, throwing meaning into his words and looks, "my daisy will supplant every other flower in my estimation."

"Why should it?" she asks. "What charm can a simple flower of the field possess for you who have choice exotics to cult?"

"Memory will rank the daisy highest in my heart," he says, pointedly; "especially when I think of those you gave me. Cannot you trust me now, Miss Tresham, not to despise a daisy because a carnation lays beside it?"

"But what would Lady Viola say to it all?" she asks, as she looks keenly into his face, thinking that the mention of her name might bring him into a proper frame of mind.

"I cannot say," he stammers, in confusion, for too well he knows that he is trifling with the future happiness of two women—English roses whose thorns might wound him yet to the heart.

His good angel must have been at his side, for he does not press for the favour, which causes Hazel to feel a little disappointed that her admonition had taken such effect.

"Here it is if you care to have it now," she falters, giving him the bunch of carnations.

Such a look comes into her lovely eyes—pain mingled with tender reproach, as if to protest against his growing power over her that he feels not compunction, but love's desire to solace and comfort its object—and taking the fragrant things, he, with a sudden impulse unaccountable to him at the moment and ever after, caught the rosy fingers and pressed them passionately to his lips. Then, seeing how pale she becomes, and that she trembles like a timid bird, says humbly,—

"Don't be angry with me, fair Daisy Queen, you would not if you knew my heart."

"I wish I did not know it so well," she falters, "for it is a traitor, and deserves rebuke."

"But surely you will pardon even its weaknesses when it has erred solely through you, who have been the lode-star, the sweet magnet?"

"Indeed! You ascribe too much power to poor little me. If we are to be friends, my lord, we must taboo all mention of hearts. Do you promise?"

"Yes," he says, "anything rather than forfeit your friendship."

His visit comes to an end all too soon, and Hazel is hardly satisfied with herself for having given him even slight encouragement under the veil of friendship.

CHAPTER III.

"Miss Tresham, I declare!" says a well-known voice, as Lord Maudsley, accompanied by a lady, comes up to where she is seated watching the lapping of the waves, a book lying idly in her lap. "Permit me to introduce to you my mother."

And in a moment she feels her hand in the clasp of Lady Maudsley, who says, in a voice so like his, it is so thrilling and musical,—

"I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Treasham; we must be great friends," seating herself beside Hazel, as if she had known her for years, in that high-bred, easy manner of the true gentlewoman.

"How like him!" Hazel thinks, as she looks into the aristocratic, but sweet face of his mother; "the same brown eyes, soft and tender; fair hair, just commencing to show little waves of silver."

"What a sweet girl she is!" thinks Lady Maudsley; "she certainly deserves the title of Daisy Queen. She is far lovelier than even Viola."

"I am also pleased to meet you, Lady Maudsley," replies Hazel, a little tremour in her sweet voice. "I was not aware you had seen me before."

"Ah, you see, I have the advantage of you, Miss Treasham," shaking her head playfully. "When you were at the ball I was also there, though my naughty boy did not introduce you, and saw the havoc you caused among the gentlemen. Why, you actually made my future daughter, Lady Viola, posit because she has reigned hitherto queen of all the revels she has graced."

A flood of crimson suffuses her face, and reaches the little pink shells of ears, as she listens to the delicate compliment paid her by the mother of the man who had stolen away her heart.

"I fear I do not deserve your very flattering eulogiums, Lady Maudsley," says Hazel, as she casts a swift side glance at Aubury to see how his mother's opinion affects him. "I am only a very simple *débütante*, and the laurels you so kindly apportion might not remain long in my keeping."

"Pardon me, but the lady I have not yet seen who could snatch them away from you. Are you not of my opinion, dear water?" he says, meaningly.

"I declare you will quite turn my head," laughs Hazel, showing her tiny pearly teeth, and with beams of joyous light dancing in her violet eyes, that portray the emotions of her pure young soul just as a lake mirrors the sky.

Rising, Lady Maudsley holds out her hand with a pleasant smile as she says,—

"I see Captain and Mrs. Travers coming towards us, Aubury, so must say adieu, Miss Treasham. You must come and see me; I am staying on the esplanade—that is, if you will spare an hour or so with an old lady who loves young people's society. Will you, dear?"

"I shall be only too happy," replies Hazel, returning the warm pressure of her ladyship's hand.

Such a beaming look of gratitude comes into Lord Maudsley's face as he listens to Hazel's kind, almost affectionate, acceptance of his mother's invitation as he, too, says "Good-day" regretfully, he wishing to remain where his heart always was now—with her his beautiful daisy queen, love for whom had sprung up in a night like a delicate passion flower.

"What a sweet woman!" thinks Hazel, as she muses on the rare chance that has thrown her into the society of people she never dreamt of meeting. "I wonder how it will all end? I suppose in a mere acquaintanceship which will cease almost as soon as it commenced. Ah, mel things might have been different had poor father lived, and this Chancery suit never begun. She spoke of Lady Viola, who will soon be his wife. Oh! how my heart sank when it was confirmed by his own mother. She, so cold and repellent; every word she uttered that night was a cutting sarcasm and insult. Fugh! the idea makes me wretched. Were she different I would not care so much; I could bear it better."

All the beauty had gone out of the glorious summer morning now that Aubury was not at her side, and the bitterness of the thought that he was another's, bound by formalities which society considers inviolable, makes her feel even more miserable still; although in her heart she is forced to admit that no in-

justice has been done her, but that, on the other hand, it is she herself who is invading Lady Viola's Eden.

But when does love ever stop to consider obstacles? Never since the old, old story was begun, and Adam was tempted to perdition almost for the sake of that great love he felt for Eve, the mother of all peoples.

She closes her book with a sigh, and, without taking a parting glance at the dancing waves which coquette at her feet playfully as if wishing to caress them, rises, and with listless steps makes her way home, hoping that she might again receive his smiles before reaching there.

As if some kind fairy had divined her thoughts and resolved to gratify her, Lord Maudsley, who, having seen his mother home, returns in haste to meet the idol of his soul, this new goddess, whose eyes had made sad havoc of his heart, comes up and says, with a little bit of transparent hypocrisy,—

"I never thought of renewing our tête-à-tête so soon, Miss Treasham. Must you really desert the sands just yet?" looking with a wealth of tender pleading, which causes her silken lashes to droop prettily, trembling like threads of gossamer in the summer breeze that comes from the gates of the sun.

"Oh! yes," she returns, shyly, fearing to raise her eyes lest he should read in them her sweet secret, dangerous alike to his happiness as to hers—a rock on which their joint lives might be made shipwreck. "I must, indeed, be moving now, as my mother will be anxious, and I have overstayed my time. The sea looked so enchanting that I was fain to tarry."

How is it that love glides the sunshine, paints the flowers in more brilliant hues, imparts a balminess to the air, and lights up the whole of nature with a kind of after-glow, soft and roseate, and oh! so beautiful.

Standing by his side, feeling that his glances are bent on her face, she knows now that she is beloved, and is almost tempted to test the decrees of fate, and to avow with those lamps of the soul that she has given her fresh, young heart to him.

Little hypocrite, when only a few minutes back you were as miserable as a maiden could well be, never looking even at the waves or noticing how gloriously the sun was shining, or how the white-winged albatross skimmed the surface of the blue waters in search of prey.

"Will you not stay just to hear the band? They are going to play a new waltz—a German one—and I hear it is excellent."

"I suppose I must not say no," she says, coyly, "although I fear I shall get scolded. It is really too bad of you to tempt me, but I am so very fond of music, especially a band, for I do not think a piano can ever do justice to a really good waltz."

"That depends upon the player," he says, meaningly. "Some people have the soul of music at the tips of their fingers, but then they have exquisitely-sensitive natures, such as I feel you possess. Do you know that I am longing to hear you play? I saw your piano open and one of Mendelssohn's songs without words on the stand, but etiquette forbade me asking you the favour on my first visit."

"You might, I am sure," she says, simply. "Would you have granted it?" he asks, quickly.

"Yes, if you had very much wished it," she replies gently, looking down on the soft, silvery sand, and carving her name with the tip of her parasol, in evident confused pleasure, as the grand band strikes up its melodious strains, echoing over sea and land, as if Neptune was holding court, and that mermaids were singing those witching strains that lure men to destruction.

"How delightful this is!" he murmurs, with a little sigh of rapture. "I wish it could last for ever and ever, it is so soul-entrancing, just like a summer's dream! Why should these minutes of blissful enjoyment be so transient?"

"You are, indeed, a lover of music," she says archly, "to style it so laudatorily. Surely you are an enthusiast!"

"I am," he replies, bending his soft brown eyes on her, "but not in the way you give me credit. Music has its charms; but there are higher things that satisfy the longings of our soul and make us wish that such joys should never have an end. I mean the society of some one who is in perfect sympathy with you, whose voice has melody in it, whose eyes teem with friendly tenderness, whose hand-clasp thrills you with pleasurable ecstasy, whose face becomes so dear as to haunt the mind by day and night. Oh! what can equal such a joy as that I have pictured?"

"Is it possible that a man can feel that friendship for another?" she asks, demurely. "I will answer your question by putting another," he says, smiling, "are men the only inhabitants of this world of ours?"

"Well, no, there are birds, beasts, and fishes," she returns, roughly, shading her laughing face with her sunshade.

"Oh! certainly, I admit that for the sake of argument," he replies, with playful gravity; "but I thought that the scheme of creation was not complete without lovely woman—one feels no joy in the society of birds, beasts, and fishes, you know."

All at once Hazel's face becomes clouded as she sees her *déte noir*, Mrs. De Smythe, emerging from a bathing machine close by, waving her well-known red parasol by way of saying,—

"I am coming, do wait for me."

"I must really say good-bye now," says the girl, with startling abruptness. "I have heard the waltz, and thanks very much for a pleasant quarter of an hour."

"It's that old she-dragon that has frightened my sweet daisy queen away. I wish she had stayed longer in her bath, insufferable old party," and he gnaws the ends of his moustache fiercely as he strides along the beach towards the esplanade, but watching Hazel's white clad figure as she ascends with light, fleet feet the steps leading to the town.

"How late you are, my love?" greets her mother, "and I have been so anxious for your return, as I have received a telegram from Mr. Bethune, summoning me to London to-morrow on important business with regard to the suit. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I wish you were coming with me; but we cannot both leave home together."

"How wrong it is for me to feel pleased," thinks Hazel, "dear mother, and I have never been separated for a day, and yet no pang of regret assails me at the news," but says,—

"How long will you be away mother dear?" "Perhaps a week, or even more. Mrs. De Smythe will kindly come and keep you company, no doubt."

"The fates forbid," thinks Hazel, but says aloud, "there's no occasion, dear mother, I shall find plenty to do in your absence; besides, I shall have your letters to answer."

As if fate has resolved to force Mrs. De Smythe upon Hazel, she is announced, and, in her playful manner, at once plunges into the gossip of the locality, more than once referring to the growing estrangement between Lord Maudsley and his *fiancée*.

Hazel firmly but courteously declines to have the gushing widow as a companion during her mother's absence.

"Artful mix!" thinks the disappointed dame, as she takes her leave; "I know why you don't want me. Never mind, I have eyes, and plenty of time, and can use both to some purpose."

Hazel does not venture out the first day she is alone, for she holds a council with her own heart as to her future line of action.

"Am I to be such a little Puritan?" she murmurs, as she surveys her dainty figure in the mirror the second morning after her mother's departure. "What is there to fear?—nothing. If I am to be ruled by the opinions of others, so as to take all charm and colour out of my life, I might as well turn nun at

once; but I won't—there," as she stamps her little foot resolutely, and frowns at an imaginary Lady Viola, whose haughty looks and taunts she has not yet forgotten, much less forgiven.

Such a picture of girlish freshness and simplicity, in an invisible green cashmere dress, that fits her superb willowy form to perfection, is not easily conceivable, with no ornament save the snowy cuffs and collar that encircle her fair rounded throat and wrists—not even so much as a simple brooch does she wear, its place being taken by a knot of pinks, that try to rival the delicate tinge of her cheek, but fails sadly. Her hair gathered in a mass of rich plaits behind, the plume of feathers shading her winsome face, dimpled with sunny smiles, as she murmurs,—

"I wonder if I shall find Lady Maudsley at home, and whether he will be there? Perhaps, after all, it will be better were he not, else he might betray the secret which leaps into his eyes every time we meet."

"This is very kind of you, dear Miss Tressham," says her ladyship, taking both her hands affectionately in hers, and leading her to a seat overlooking the sea, now a sheet of molten silver. "I have looked for you some days in vain, and began to think you had forgotten me. Aubury is so enamoured of his future bride's society that he leaves me very much alone. You don't know what pleasure your visit affords me."

Hazel wishes her ladyship had not referred to Lady Viola, to whom she has taken an inveterate dislike; but she does not show this in her manner, as she says,—

"It is very kind of you to say so. The pleasure is, I assure you, mutual."

Presently Lady Maudsley begs Hazel to play to her, saying,—

"Music is my special delight. It is Heaven's best gift, and cheers us when everything else fails!"

Without any needless fuss Hazel seats herself at the piano and plays the theme that had attracted Lord Maudsley's attention when he visited her, viz., Mendelssohn's songs without words.

"How beautifully rendered!" exclaims her ladyship, delightedly. "Why, my dear girl, you are truly gifted! Play another, please, if it is not tiring you too much."

Hazel complies readily, and is inspired—in fact, lost in a reverie, sad yet sweet—her white fingers flitting over the keys like the wand of an enchanter, producing mysterious combinations of harmony that seem to have been echoed from another sphere.

Both player and listener were so absorbed that neither noticed Lord Maudsley enter—he treading as light as air lest he should disturb the delicious spell which invades the apartment.

Hazel blushes when he, at the finish, comes towards her, saying, as he takes her hand in his,—

"This is a pleasure, indeed, and the music a treat one seldom hears. Is it not so, mother?"

"Yes, Aubury, I almost regret you came in. I know it is selfish of me to say so, but I cannot help enjoying such playing as Miss Tressham's."

"Surely you will not leave the piano now that I have come?" he says, bending over her until his warm breath fans her cheek, producing a thrill that dyes her face with love's colours.

"Pray, excuse me," she pleads, with sweet confusion, "I feel rather tired."

"Don't press her, Aubury," says his mother, coming to Hazel's help; "she will oblige you presently. She has played so many pieces already, and must feel fatigued."

There is a rustle of silks, and Hazel sees her rival floating in, and catches the expression of scornful impatience in her proud face, which says as plainly as words could,—

"You here of all people in the world—you, the daughter of a person who I hear lets lodgings. The idea is quite dreadful; I must

put Lady Maudsley on her guard. This is some of Aubury's doing; mamma must bring him to reason."

When the greetings are over Lady Viola taps Aubury's mother with the jewelled handle of her costly lace parasol, saying,—

"I wish to speak to you, dear Lady Maudsley. Shall we go to your boudoir?"

"Yes, if you wish, Viola," says her ladyship, innocently; and turning to Hazel she says, kindly, "will you excuse us, dear Miss Tressham, for a few minutes? Aubury will show you our mosaics and coins which are of a rare kind."

"How can I ever thank you for coming to brighten up my dear old mother?" he whispers, when they are alone. "Do you know I looked about for you everywhere, and was thinking of calling upon you and Mrs. Tressham? I was in despair, for I began to fear you were ill or something worse."

"Could there be anything worse?" she says, archly.

"Yes," he replies, with passionate earnestness, "you might have left Scarborough. That would have been the worst blow of all for—your friends."

He was about to say "for me," but checked the rash impulse in time, much to Hazel's relief, for with a woman's quick instinct she realises the danger of even the slightest avowal of affection on his part.

"But you will some day leave here," she remarks. "This is a life of change, of meetings and partings."

"Would that it were not," he says, moodily. "Better never to meet those whom you conceive a true friendship for if it is only to end in parting for ever; but, come, I am forgetting my mother's commands," as he opens an Indian cabinet, displaying a rare collection of curiosities.

While Hazel and Aubury are thus engaged Lady Viola is talking volubly and almost indignantly to her hostess, the theme being Hazel.

"Really, I was never so surprised as when I saw that person in your drawing-room," says Viola, with asperity. "Do you know who she is?"

"Yes, my guest, Viola," she says, with quiet dignity, "and as such should be sacred from discussion."

"But her mother lets lodgings here in Scarborough; I ascertained that from a reliable source."

"What is that to me? I suppose they are in reduced circumstances, for anyone can see that the girl is a lady in every respect. Come, Viola, it would be wiser to drop these foolish prejudices if you would be happy. Ladies of our class should be the first to hold out the hand of friendship to those whom misfortune has overtaken, remembering that what has happened to them to-day might befall us to-morrow."

"I am not of your opinion, Lady Maudsley," says the beauty, with a pout. "There should be a strict line of demarcation that classes should not overstep; besides, she has already dazzled the roving fancy of Aubury."

"That is absurd," her ladyship retorts, with an angry flush. "My son is too high-minded to forget what is due to you, Viola, and his own honour."

"None are so blind as those who won't see," replies Viola, with a shrug. "However, I do not fear her, but I certainly decline to meet her as an equal, therefore excuse me staying now, if you will. Kindly apprise Aubury that I am going."

"That is as you please, Lady Culver," says the old lady, drawing herself up with proud dignity. "Anyone I think good enough to meet me under my own roof shall not be insulted as you propose. I will see you to your carriage while my son acts the part of host to my guest."

Viola, when too late, sees she has quite offended Lady Maudsley, but though tears of mortification and anger rush into her eyes

yet she will not own herself in fault, but merely says,—

"Very well. But I need not trouble you; the butler will see me seated."

Meanwhile the brief half-hour was over all too soon for Lord Maudsley, who had lived in a veritable paradise peopled with love's imagining and tender impulses. He loved to touch Hazel's hand if only for a moment, and when she smiled at some witty saying or anecdote he was prouder than if he had been an orator acclaimed by thousands.

"Where is Viola?" he asks, when his mother enters.

"Gone," she replies. "She asked me to excuse her to you and Miss Tressham."

But he reads between the lines, and knows that jealousy is the cause of her sudden flight, and it maddens him to think that she has divined his secret.

"Why was I not called to escort her to her carriage?" he says, with a slight frown, which Hazel misinterprets, and she wishes now that she had not come to witness his solicitude for Lady Viola.

"She was in rather a hurry and did not wish to disturb you, Aubury, that was all."

At this point the subject was dropped by tacit consent, and all went off merrily as a marriage bell till the moment Hazel bids her kind hostess good-bye.

CHAPTER IV.

"This is my last day of absolute freedom," Hazel says, as she looks at herself in the mirror; "I cannot do better than spend it out-of-doors in the society of the sea and bright dancing waves, but not on the sands, where I might meet him."

Free as air is her step as she makes her way to the coast between Scarborough and Filey, a spot noted for its dangers to the unwary wanderer.

"This is a nice quiet place," she says, as she finds herself in a bay formed by the cliffs. "He will not find me here, and I can try to sketch his face from memory, so that when we part for ever I may possess a slight token of the brief happiness that ceased all too soon."

The sun glints on the sands, turning them into golden stretches, along which little rivulets of clear water trickle.

It is an animated scene, and fills the girl's heart with pleasure, for she is in sympathy with nature's aspect now that there is every hope of her mother winning the Chancery suit.

Opening her satchel she takes out drawing-pencils and commences her sketch, and so absorbed is she in love's occupation that she forgets the flight of time or the dangers incidental to the spot she has selected.

"That is not his expression, it is merely the colourless face. I want to catch that soft look in his brown eyes, and the mobility of his features, each one of which is a poem to me—something to dwell upon and to remember with pleasure."

She tears up more than one crude picture, and had nearly finished another to her satisfaction when the silence was broken by the well-known voice of the man whose face she was trying her skill to portray.

"Fortune, they say, favours those who persevere," says Lord Maudsley, joyously, as he stands, straw hat in hand, smiling down upon her evident confusion, as she hastily puts away the picture, but not before he has caught sight of it.

"How did you find me?" she says, tremulously. "I thought I should be out of ken almost."

"Did I not say that the magnet always attracts? That is why I am before you. But to come to words of sober reason. I was deputed by my mother to call upon you this morning, which I did, only to find you had gone out. A most intelligent maid told me you had come in this direction, and I followed and am here."

"Lady Maudsley is very kind to think of me," she says, with a pensive little smile, thinking how fleeting their acquaintance would prove. "My mother returns to-day, so I thought I would enjoy a ramble by myself in this beautiful spot, where nature is so calm and tranquil."

"You were drawing just now," says the pity on me and show your efforts."

"Oh, no," she falters; "I do not profess to be an artist, and my attempts would only provoke a smile of pity for my ambition."

"But suppose I confess that I did catch a glimpse of your skill, and that the subject was—"

"Oh no, don't," she cries, in a piteous little voice. "I—I was only trying to remember a—"

"Man who loves you!" he exclaims, passionately, as he catches her supple form in his arms, and looks with a wealth of yearning love into the frightened face, which is now pale with conflicting fear and sweet maiden heart-flutterings.

"Let me go!" she pleads. "I have no right to listen to such words from you? What can you deem me? Oh! surely I have not done anything to deserve this. You are not free, and it is an insult to me. Release me, I beg! I am not strong—I am but a weak woman and you a man."

"Oh, my darling, do not misinterpret my actions," he says, in a tone of pain. "You are safe with me. I love you, and for your sweet sake, and to save you from one moment's anxiety, would die a thousand deaths. You cannot, in fact, never will, know what my fight with love and conscience has been."

All this while he holds her to his heart, looking down with love's tenderness into the depths of those wondrous eyes of hers, which now plead so eloquently for pity, mercy, she being a weak, loving woman.

"But there is Lady Viola, she is your affianced wife," she gasps, "I am only a poor girl, with nothing that can compete with her. She loves you. Oh! Aubury, for both our sakes be pitiful and wise. You would not break your mother's heart or make of me a byword among women. Think of all you will have to suffer if you break your plighted word. Oh! is there no mercy in your heart for one who loving you now might be tempted to hate you?"

With one great sob of repentant anguish walling up from the soul he inch by inch uncloses his arms, like a miser parting with his gold, and she is free—this lovely siren, who might well pass for one of those mysterious beings who lure men down into the treacherous depths of the blue, deep, restless sea.

For a moment she is so weak that she clings to his arm like ivy to the oak, looking up into his remorseful face with a faint smile of gratitude, and then turning away walks straight along the yellow sands, as if to put distance safe and sure between her and temptation of such a fiery character as only she and Heaven wot of. Her love for him was so deep that to endure suffering for his sake would be a pleasure.

Oh! who can plumb the recesses of a woman's heart when love, true, devoting and self-sacrificing, is hidden away there, like pearls waiting to be found and brought to light.

No one can do this or ever has; and he, the man who has, in a moment of rash impulse, spoken out and revealed his secret, watches her go, and murmurs, as he allows his head to sink lower and lower,—

"It is better that we should part—beat for her, for me, and for those who claim our fealty; but, oh! how hard it is to awaken to the fact that you have mistaken admiration for love, and that when, at last, you find the other part of your soul it is too late, and every thought then becomes a sin. Better far to walk straight into those tumultuous waves and not risk than to live on in a hopeless battle with self."

On and on goes poor Hazel, tears in her eyes, a great throbbing pain at her heart, when her footsteps are arrested by the tide, which, surging in, bars her further progress.

"What is this?" she murmurs. "Ah! I realise it all now, the tide is coming in fast. Oh! kind fate, that the means of escape is not cut off."

Rushing back, she sees him lying prone on the sands, his head resting on his arm, and great sobs shaking his frame as if it were only a reed.

In her terror she forgets all, and kneeling, says, as she shakes him by the shoulder,—

"Aubury, look, the tide is hemming us in fast; what are we to do?"

"Leave me," he groans, in abject despair; "save yourself, Hazel, I want to die. What have I to live for now that you have turned against me?"

"Oh! do not say that, Aubury. Come, be brave, Heaven may yet reward us if we are only true to the principles of honour that guide those who wish to obtain and retain the confidence and respect of their fellows." Do you not think my poor heart bleeds for you? Oh! if only you could see into it, you would find that in Hazel Treesham you possess a true, devoted friend."

"That will not still the craving of my soul," he says, bitterly; "I ask for bread and you give me a stone. Oh! Hazel, life must be sweet to you; escape while there is yet time."

"And leave you to die?" she gasps, as her little hand tightens its grasp on his shoulder, as if she would raise him by sheer force, and save him in spite of himself.

"If you stay so will I, and the same cruel wave will engulf us both."

"You do love me? Oh! my darling, my daisy queen, the bitterness of death itself cannot rob me of the sweet truth," he exclaims, rising, and dashing away the tears from his eyes.

"That is my own brave Aubury," she exclaims, placing one hand caressingly on his arm, and looking up in his face with a smile such as a mother would give her first-born, out of the wealth of that love which, like a spring of pure water, is inexhaustible; "let the knowledge that we love be sufficient, whether we live or die."

"You, a weak, delicate woman, put me to shame!" he cries. "Oh! the selfishness of us men, who crave for the boon of a woman's love, although we may be unworthy of it, or it is not hers to give! Put your hand in mine, Hazel, and tell me that if ever I am free to wed you will be my wife."

"Come, sir," she says, with playful earnestness, thinking by affecting that style to divert his attention from the theme he is pursuing, "this is no time for promises; sufficient for us both let it be that we know we love each other; the world cannot rob us of that consolation."

"I am strong now," he says, retaining her hand in his and leading her in the direction of Scarborough, only to find that the sea has cut off all retreat from the bay, and the sudden tide with hoarse murmurs advances like a determined enemy fighting with time inch by inch, and submerging the yellow sands at each fresh bound, fringing its cruel leaps with foam as if it were spitting venom at the two helpless beings who find themselves face to face with death.

"What is to be done?" she asks, nervously, but repressing the natural fear that springs up in her heart by a determined effort of will lest he should think her a little coward; "where can we find safety?"

"I can swim if only you would trust yourself to the water, Hazel. I would bear you up," he says, eagerly.

"Oh! no! Trust myself to those cold glittering waves! I dare not," she replies, with a visible shudder, and a look of horror that effectually prevents him from pressing the suggestion again.

"There is time left us yet," he says, calmly;

"let me place you on that rock yonder, while I explore the cliff. I see a ledge just wide enough to seat us safely, if only we can manage to reach it."

"Don't leave me," she pleads. "It is not that I fear death exactly, but the solitude is something awful, so depressing that I shudder to only think of it! Cannot we wave our handkerchiefs, or, better still, my sunshade? Some passing vessel might observe us and send to our assistance."

Perceiving how alarmed she is becoming he seats himself ather side on the rock, and chats pleasantly about some adventure that befell him while travelling, keeping his eyes fixed steadily on the advancing tide the while, and calculating how long it would take for it to cover the whole of the sands.

When she is calmer he says,—

"Happy thought! I have a flask of sherry in my pocket. Now, supposing you take just half-a-glass it will revive you, while I try to reach the ledge. Even were I such a poltroon as to wish to leave you it would be an impossible feat. We are hemmed in completely, and unless we make an effort to reach yonder ledge in less than half-an-hour this rock will be submerged. Come, Hazel, you prompted me only a little while back not to be despairing when I thought all hope of gaining your love had gone. Let me now, as one who values your life more than his own, beg of you to be brave. I will find a way up yonder for both of us if only you will permit me."

"Is it hard to die?" she asks, clinging to him lovingly. "Are the waves cruel? Do they dash all beauty out of those they devour? Oh! Aubury, I desire to live, if only for my poor mother's sake. I am all the world to her. Go, find a way to safety. I will be brave and fight a hard battle against death because it is your wish."

"My darling," he murmurs, as he strains her to his heart and kisses her trembling lips. It comforts her to feel his caresses on brow, eyes, cheeks, lips, and tresses—such a rain of love as melts her very soul into tenderness, and for the moment makes her even forget the grim spectre that hovers over the spot, hoping to claim them both as his lawful prey—one lovely as an angel, the other a young giant, full of the vigour of health and early manhood.

Aubury feels now that life is worth baffling for, since he has tasted the nectar of those dear lips, and he bounds away like a gladiator into the arena of conflict, with the sure conviction that victory will be his.

What a struggle it is to reach that narrow ledge and to pilot Hazel there in safety.

But a stout heart, true eye, and strong hands win in the end, and the lovers look down upon the roaring waves with a degree of complacency, in that now they are safe beyond their cruel reach.

"Cling to me, darling!" he says, "and do not look down too much, lest you should become giddy. Our only hope is that some one may have seen us come this way, and, knowing its dangers, raise an alarm."

"Will the water come as high as this?" she falters.

He could not say, but still he answers, cheerily,—

"No, darling, nothing can touch you here. Listen! wasn't that a shout?" he adds, eagerly, as the waves leap up and the spray wets them.

"No, only the cry of a seagull," she says, sadly. "Aubury, if you should escape, tell my poor mother that my last prayer was for her! You will comfort her, will you not? And, for the sake of the love you bear me, be to her a son."

"Courage, dearest! There is no reason to give away to despair yet. If you could but divest yourself of the dread that has seized you how happy you might be. We are here alone, seated side by side, with no prying eye to watch our happiness. Yesterday I would have given worlds for such an opportunity as

this, to hold you in my arms, and to know that you love me."

Such reasonings as these, and the kisses he gives her, tend to reassure her sinking spirits, and with her head resting on his shoulder she looks out upon the waste of waters, and wonders whether Heaven begins at that blue vault, and if she and Aubrey would be admitted through its pearly gates should death overtake them, because of the love that is in their hearts for each other.

Hazel had reason to bless Mrs. De Smythe for her prying propensities on this memorable day of all others.

"I am not to chaperone her," thinks Mrs. De Smythe, in allusion to Hazel having declined her offer of companionship; "but she little knows how determined I am when I have made up my mind to anything. She doesn't dream that I am acquainted with all her movements; and didn't I smile to myself when I saw Lady Viola Culver hasten away from Lady Maudsley's because she was there. This morning she is trying to throw me off the scent, but she hasn't. I know she has gone in the direction of Filey, and that a certain noble lord has walked the same way. How transparent people are, like the ostrich that hides his head in the sand, and thinks its whole body covered! I'll walk along the cliffs and meet the pair, and won't they look sheepish, that's all!"

It required a great sacrifice on her part to walk such a long distance on a warm day, especially as she was no feather weight; but the delight of springing a mine upon Hazel was not to be lost for the sake of a longer walk than usual.

"Dear me, not a vestige of them," she says, fanning herself violently; "I do believe they have taken a short cut up the cliff and are now enjoying themselves miles away. Only to think of the wickedness of girls! I never did such things."

But still she is not to be daunted and struggles on, panting and puffing like an engine, until she reaches that part of the cliffs which overhang the bay.

"I must rest here," she mutters; "I am completely done up, and need refreshment; they cannot be on the beach hereabouts, for the tide is up, and no one who knows Scarborough would trust themselves to the mercy of the sea."

Producing a silver flask well charged with sherry, and a sandwich case crammed with nice thin ham waters, she becomes lost for the time being in her pleasant occupation, unmindful of the risk she runs of losing her crimson parasol, which she has placed open by her side.

"There, I do declare it has blown over," she cries in dismay, as the wind most ungallantly whirls the gaudy thing out of her sight. "Did I ever see anything so provoking? It is all owing to that silly girl, and it cost me a guinea!"

Finishing hastily her luncheon, so that the wind should not deprive her of that dainty morsel, she rises, and peers carefully into the abyss, and is startled by hearing a shout for help.

Lord Maudsley, having seen the parasol in its descent, and judging that some one is above, takes the opportunity of making their position known.

"Bless my heart!" exclaims the astonished widow, "that certainly sounded like a human voice! There it is again! I'll just peep over. Why, it may be the pair caught by the tide! What a shocking revelation it will be, and how people will talk!"

Although far from venturesome in disposition, yet she cannot repress her curiosity, and, going down on her hands and knees, stretches out her neck, and is rewarded by catching sight of the lovers.

"Well, I do declare, it's the oddest thing I ever saw! I know it's Hazel, by her hat. I must run and get help to save them. Poor dears! they mustn't drown like cats while I have

feet to run with and a tongue to ask for assistance."

All her spite at being outwitted banishes in the presence of their danger, and her good heart is in the ascendant as she tears along towards the coastguard station, eager to obtain the help she knows Hazel and her companion so much need. Always willing to lend a hand in times of danger, the noble fellows of whom England has every reason to be proud quickly responded to the appeal, and in half-an-hour the lovers were extricated from their deadly peril.

CHAPTER V.

NATURALLY such an event as that just recorded causes a lot of comment, especially when Lord Maudsley is an engaged man, and Hazel the belle of Scarborough.

Tongues wagged and so did heads, and eyes were upturned in pious horror, because society thought that two persons had been found out, so to speak, while, in reality, they were more to be pitied than blamed.

"I will not listen to one word, Lord Maudsley," says Viola, disdainfully. "You met that artful girl by appointment; nothing you can say will alter my opinion."

"Does my word, pledged on the honour of a gentleman, count for nothing?" he asks, knitting his brows indignantly.

"Honour," she replies, scornfully; "that is mere sentiment with some people. I blame her more than you, for she knows of our engagement. A nice thing, is it not, to have a scandal set afloat about you and the daughter of a common lodging housekeeper?"

"You have said enough," he says, sternly. "As you do not believe in my word, and will insist upon insulting me, I have no alternative than to offer you your freedom."

Lady Viola becomes pale to the very lips as she listens to his words; for, indeed, she cares for him as much as it is in her selfish nature to for anybody, but her pride cannot permit her to apologise; and she merely says, with a haughty curl of her upper lip, which adds an additional sting to her words,—

"You offer me my liberty so that you may be free to carry on an intrigue with that person, for even you are, I feel sure, not mad enough to offer her marriage. I wonder what your mother thinks of it all?"

"Please leave Lady Maudsley out of the question?" he says, coldly. "A woman yourself, you should be the first to put a charitable construction upon the misfortune that overtook one of your own sex. I am glad that we understand each other before it is too late. I want someone who has a heart, and not—"

"Enough," she cries, haughtily, "consider the interview at an end, and yourself free."

He bows courteously, and is pleased that he is now free to make Hazel full reparation for the harm he has done her unintentionally.

"I could have struck him," Viola almost hisses, as she clenches her hands to keep down the wrath that threatens to madden her quite. "Oh, how bitter it is to discover that you have trusted your all to one who is unworthy. He never loved me, I feel sure of that, or he would not have acted in this precipitate way. Did he take me for a slave to submit tamely to this outrage upon my most sacred feelings? He has learnt, when too late, that the daughter of an earl does not care to come into rivalry with the offspring of a mere pauper. His mother will now see that I was right when I warned her against taking such a person out of her station."

Ill-news grows apace just as weeds do, and it was not long before gossips began retailing over the tea-tables, with sundry variations, that Lord Maudsley and Lady Viola were at daggers drawn, and that all was over between them.

Meanwhile poor Hazel is so ill that she has to keep her bed, and knows nothing of what has been said in Scarborough about her adventure.

But Bethune, of course, is fully aware of the liberty that scandal is taking with Hazel's fair fame.

"She is as pure as an angel," he thinks. "but Maudsley is a villain. If duelling were not forbidden I would call him out and shoot him like a dog. He was pledged to one of his own rank, beautiful, gifted, and wealthy, so that no excuse can be found for him. I wish Hazel would accept me; I would soon show him that she had a protector able and willing to defend her against his perfidious advances. He cannot love her as I do."

During his musing Mrs. Tressham enters, looking sad and careworn on her daughter's account, for she was the only link that bound her to life, and if it snapped nothing would remain but for her to lay down and die.

"Is Miss Tressham better?" he asks, anxiously.

"Yes, very much, I am thankful to say, Mr. Bethune. She is not over strong. The tension on her nerves and delicate constitution while in peril did the mischief. Poor darling! it was a narrow escape."

"Yes, that is true," he observes, "and one that will not easily be forgotten by many. I would give much if Maudsley were not mixed up in the affair."

"That can do my child no harm. I am only too thankful she was not alone in her danger, for she would have lost her presence of mind, I feel sure, and then my darling would have perished," she says, bravely.

"But you forget that tongues will chatter when a lovely girl is in the society of a gentleman alone, especially when he is not free."

"I forget nothing, Mr. Bethune," replies the staunch, true mother, with a ring of displeasure, which he is not slow in noting. "My child is as good and pure as the flowers there in that vase. What the scandal-mongers may say is perfectly indifferent to me. I know her nature and its truth."

"Heaven forbid that I should breathe a word contrary to that," he says, warmly.

"Why, I would swear to her sweet innocence of purpose before the whole world. You mistake my meaning. I'd stake my soul on her sweet purity. What I mean is that Lord Maudsley cannot, in his position, seek her society without raising the cruel suspicions of a too censorious world. It is entirely the great love I bear dear Miss Tressham and high respect for you that makes me, perhaps, too cautious where the slightest breath of opprobrium threatens her."

"Forgive me, Mr. Bethune," she says, regretfully; "I am too hasty. You have been the truest friend I have ever had in my life; but I suppose the anxiety I have passed through in London with the lawyers cross-examining me, and then the shock of finding my child so ill has made me unreasonable, nay unjust."

"I can easily pardon any little harshness where your daughter is concerned, for she is my one thought when I rise in the morning, and at night. To secure her happiness what would I not do or dare?"

"I only pray that she will reward you for all your love and fealty," she replies, fervently.

"Amen," he says, solemnly. "Have I your permission to broach the subject to her? Do you think there is hope?"

"I cannot say," she returns; "but I can pray, and trust to her grateful heart when she learns that you have been the means of probably winning our cause, which was completely out of our power had you not given your valuable aid and influence."

Bethune feels that in her he has an ally who will enable him to press his suit with ardour, and resolves to act with extreme caution, letting the tongue of scandal drive the girl into his arms, as it were.

"Fortunately Mrs. Tressham does not know me," he thinks, "or she would not deem me so unselfish; besides, something else remains to be explained, but not before Hazel

is my wife. I must, and shall win her at any cost, for my whole future depends upon that."

A dark brooding expression comes over his face, and a gleam of unholy fire into his eyes, transforming his features entirely, imparting to them a Mephistophelian expression.

At his club he hears a repetition of the statement made public as to the engagement being broken off between Mandaley and his fiancée.

"Just my ill-luck," he mutters, savagely, pitching a fresh cigar out of window and hurrying out. "He free, there is no knowing what may happen. I am sure she is getting fond of the fellow, and, to spite Lady Viola, whom she hates, may accept him should he propose. I must bring matters to a crisis by fair means or foul, for love and ambition goad me on."

"I am so delighted to see you looking your old self again, Miss Tressham," says Bethune, tenderly, but feeling inwardly chagrined that no tell tale flush or sparkle proclaimed the welcome fact that he is dearer to her than a mere ordinary acquaintance.

"Thanks," she replies, languidly; "I am all right again. Now, let me take this opportunity of saying how grateful I am for all you have done for my dear mother."

"But will you not add yourself, whom I have most desired to serve?" he asks, taking her hand, and with a wealth of tender pathos in his voice. "Cannot you see, dear Hazel (how she starts and snatches her hand away), that I love you madly? Will you be my wife? Let me come between you and the cruel slander of the world. Oh! my darling, think what it is to forfeit the good opinion of society, and by granting my prayer save yourself from future misery."

"Who dares to asperse me?" she asks, proudly. "Is this only a snare on your part to force me to be your wife, Mr. Bethune?"

"No, no; I swear it is not. Lord Mandaley and Lady Viola have quarrelled, and parted for ever."

She averts her face lest he should see the gleam of joy that pervades it.

He is sorry now that in his eagerness he should have told her such a welcome truth, for he caught that side of joy that rushed over her lovely face, and hastens to add,—

"Of course, I only tell you what I have heard; but let that pass. I love you for your sweet sake alone. Do take pity on me, Hazel. Your mother is anxious that you should become my wife. She is far from strong, and the thought of being snatched away suddenly, leaving you without a protector, makes her very sad."

"My mother, much as I love her, will never influence me where my future is concerned. Besides, if she is in need of protecting care and attention my place is at her side."

"Do you mean to say that there is no hope for me?" he asks, despondingly.

"I can give you none. I esteem you, and wish earnestly to retain your good opinion and friendship, but where my whole future is at stake I dare not say more. Forget my hasty words. Indeed, I do not wish you to think me hard-hearted or ungrateful, but love must play some part in my heart before I can accept an offer of marriage."

"You reject me for no other reason than your infatuation for one who has brought your fair name into the dust?"

"It is false!" she exclaims, bridling with anger. "Please leave me; at least do not insult me by mixing my name so freely with his!"

"It is not I who do that," he returns, bitterly; "but the whole of Scarborough. Nothing else is talked of at the clubs and other places of resort but the strange adventure that befell you at Filly Bay."

"I will bear it bravely," she murmurs when he leaves her in moody silence, brooding over her rejection of his suit. "I love Aubury, and until he proves himself unworthy

I will pin my faith to him, and cling to the memory of the happy past."

CHAPTER VI.

BETHUNE is too much a man of the world to allow his feelings to come between him and the object of his love, and he takes the first opportunity of patching up a truce between himself and Hazel, still, however, resolving to carry out a scheme which he hopes will force her into his arms.

An unscrupulous man, where his passions or ambition is concerned, he sees nothing wrong in trampling down all obstacles, by fair means if possible, if not, then by foul.

Hazel feels grateful to him for not referring to the past, and accepts many little brotherly attentions at his hands to show that there is no ill-will on her part, but is deaf to all her mother's persuasions to lend a willing ear to his prayer.

Meanwhile Lord Mandaley is ill at ease, for though wishing to elude the hand of Hazel, he does not desire to ignore his mother in the matter; and she, he can see, is too sore for him to broach the subject to her, for it was a blow to her hopes to lose Lady Viola as a daughter.

"My poor darling, I am longing to be with you, to look into those dear eyes again, to feel the pressure of your little hand, but I dare not further imperil your fair fame! No, I must wait until with my mother's consent I can say, 'Hazel, will you be my wife, never to part while life lasts?'"

But while he is waiting Bethune is plotting to secure so rare a prize as Hazel Tressham, who will be one of the richest heiresses in the county of Yorkshire, and is pre-eminently beautiful—two advantages which makes him eager to possess her before others come on the scene.

The autumn leaves are just turning mellow with golden brown tints, shaded with crimson, with here and there a thread of green, when Bethune one morning at breakfast says,—

"I have purchased a yacht, ladies, and wish you would honour me by spending a day on board."

"I should very much like to, Mr. Bethune," returns Mrs. Tressham, "but I cannot possibly say when, for you know what a bad sailor I am; but Hazel I know would like it, she is very fond of the sea?"

"Yes, mother mine," puts in Hazel, laughing, "when one is not poised on a spiky ledge for seagulls to scream at, and the sea waiting to gobble one up like a cruel ogre," and continues, "rather than disappoint you, Mr. Bethune, I will come with pleasure, that is, if mother promises to come later on."

A look of triumph lights up his dark face, and he mutters,—

"Trapped!" saying aloud, "I will at once go and tell my men to have everything ship-shape against you come. I trust we shall have a very enjoyable day, with deep sea-fishing should you care for it."

"Oh, how nice that is! Just what I am so fond of," she says, gaily. "Shall we catch some mackerel? I have a great desire to taste one cooked straight out of the sea."

"Then your wish will be gratified," he says, smiling—a strange meaning smile—as he thinks, "Now we shall see who will win—Mandaley or I."

"Oh, what a fine vessel!" she says, as her eyes sparkle with pleasure at the pretty trim little craft which is riding at anchor as gracefully as a swan.

"Do you notice its name?" he asks, pointing to the bows, where is painted in gold letters "The Daisy Queen."

"Oh, how pretty!" she returns.

"Do you think so?" he says, complacently. "It is in honour of you, as you have been styled by that name ever since the ball."

A little flush of pleasure mounts her face as she says laughingly,—

"At least my friends have given me a nice

non de plume then. It shows that all the folks are not against me; so here goes"—placing her dainty foot on the steps—"to explore the beauties of my namesake."

Hazel revels in the free sea breeze and dancing waves, clapping her hands with almost childish glee when she sees the *richerché* luncheon spread on the upper deck saloon.

"Why, I declare you have a regular spread!" she cries, merrily, and her voice sounds to him sweeter than any earthly music.

"Yes, this little repast was got for your mother and self."

"How kind!" she says, innocently. "I wish she were here."

"Thank my lucky stars she is not," he thinks, "for then my plans would be frustrated."

The time passes pleasantly what with sea-fishing and coasting; but somehow Hazel's blue eyes begin to droop with sleepy languor, as if the ozone from the deep has been too strong.

"It is a risky thing," he mutters, as he watches her symptoms. "The wine cannot tell tales, and to-morrow she will be anxious to accept my suit. Everything is fair in love or war, and though she will be as pure as snow no one will believe it. I play a winning hazard for high stakes, a fortune, and the loveliest woman in Christendom."

"How strange and sleepy I feel," she says, drowsily. "I suppose it is the lulling effect of the waves. How silly I must look! What will Mr. Bethune think to see me nodding like an old lady after dinner?"

Presently he sees the sunny head sink on the bulwark, and then goes stealthily up, and taking her limbo form in his arms carries her to a tiny luxurious cabin and lays her gently on a couch, pillowing her head with soft cushions, and lingering by her.

The stars are gleaming bright and sparkling in the firmament in which the harvest moon, in all its splendour, is pouring down a flood of silver light as the little vessel glides gracefully over the waves, leaving a streak of green fire in her track, when Hazel awakes, feeling strange, and suffering with a bad headache.

For some moments she is at a loss to know what has happened.

"Where am I?" she exclaims at last, in dire alarm. "Why, yes, this is the yacht—then I am not at home. Oh, mother, where are you? I am ill—speak!"

But no answer comes to the girl's piteous call, and she staggers to the cabin window, when she realises that she is at sea with Bethune.

"I see it all," she gasps; "I fell asleep, and the evening has closed in, and he did not like to disturb me. Let me see my watch," taking it out and giving a scream of fear as she cries, "Why, it says three o'clock! Oh, what does it mean?—it has stopped; but no, it is going; my ears cannot deceive me. Where is water—I feel weak," going to a carafe standing on a table.

First she drinks a long draught; then laves her poor burning forehead and hands, murmuring,—

"I want strength. Oh, Heaven! grant me that now," tottering out on deck, where Bethune is pacing, smoking a cigar. "Mr. Bethune," she falters, "why am I here at this time of the morning? Speak, I say, if you possess one spark of a man in your nature!"

"Simply because you were asleep; and I did not care to have you disturbed," he replies, flinging his cigar overboard, and trying to appear calm.

"But do you imagine what a dastardly thing you have done? My mother will not, perhaps, survive the shock my absence has caused her. Am I not a woman with a name to hold dear?"

"No one holds your fair fame more sacred than I, Hazel Tressham! I may have com-

mitted a grave error in judgment, but, pray, pardon me, because it was prompted by love." She turns away with anger, and does not speak to him again.

The yacht is at the pier at last, and Hazel is about to go ashore when Bethune says,—"Hazel, will you be my wife?"

"Never!" she replies, scornfully.

"Enough!" he says, hoarsely. "We shall never meet again. You have ruined my life, but such is my love that I still wish you every happiness!"

She is touched by the misery that runs like a thread through his voice, and, holding out her hand, says, gently,—"I freely forgive you."

At last Aubury has gained his mother's consent to ask the Daisy Queen to become his bride, and he does not plead with her in vain.

Folding her to her heart Lady Maudeley, stroking the chestnut braids, says, sweetly,—"I am so happy, dear Hazel. You are the woman who will make Aubury's life happy."

"I hope I shall succeed," Hazel says, meekly. "Love will help me."

"Yes, that alone can aid you through life, my child. May you both be happy in my sincere prayer."

A year has passed, and Maudeley stands at the altar with Hazel, she looking radiantly lovely in her glistening robe of satin and lace, for she is a wealthy heiress, now diamonds gleam on her arms and among her brown braids.

But no flowers decked the beautiful bride save the simple daisy, a crown of which forms her bridal wreath.

The manor of Tresaham, in Yorkshire, is as yet, and foaming tankards of October ale are quaffed in honour of the event by the happy villagers.

The bride and bridegroom have nothing on their consciences respecting Lady Viola, who has consoled herself by marrying her quondam lover, the old duke.

The bells ring right merrily as they start amid cheers on their honeymoon trip, and in the whole land there is no happier man than Aubury, who is now united to "His Daisy Queen."

[THE END.]

AFTER LONG YEARS.

—O—

It was a radiant autumn afternoon, and Frank Welby came down the street with the step of a conquering hero.

He was only twenty-three; his "Psyche" had just been accepted by the Academy, and he worshipped a lovely woman with all the hopeful ecstasy of unspoken love.

"I will tell her to-night," he said to himself. "It would offend her delicacy if I spoke before the sittings were over; but how can I endure to sit so near her in silence the whole afternoon?"

His tender thoughts were rudely interrupted by a hearty slap on the back from his friend and fellow-artist, Martin Blake.

"Hallo, Frank!" was the jovial salutation. "Glad to see you! I hear you're in luck. By Jove! I congratulate you. It's something to be proud of to have a picture accepted at your age. I was twenty-six when I painted my 'Berenice,' and I only got that in by hard pushing."

Frank Welby's face shone with the proud pleasure that does any man honour.

"Have you seen it?" he asks, quickly.

"No; but Lemoine told me it was the best thing the school has turned out for years. You're at another, too, they say?"

"Yes," Frank replied, stopping in front of a shabby old house. Won't you come in and look at it? This is my studio."

"I'll be glad of the chance," was the prompt

reply; and Frank led the way into a room that had the true sympathetic atmosphere, in spite of its shabby furniture.

"It is a portrait," he said, throwing open a shutter to admit the mellow sunlight. "I want to exhibit it if I can get permission."

"What would you do, Welby, if you should take the prize?" asked the other, idly. "They say you stand a very good chance."

"I should go to Rome to study," Frank replied, flushing with the very thought. "But it is hardly likely that such a piece of good fortune will befall me."

He was busy now drawing a draped easel forward, so that the light would fall on it properly.

"If you go," said Martin, looking out of the window, "I wish you would let me have these rooms. Those windows would suit me exactly."

"But you have a much better place than this already!" his companion exclaimed, in surprise.

"I have only one room, and here I could get the whole house, I suppose?"

"What on earth would you do with it?"

"Oh, I don't know," he said, smiling faintly, as he drummed on the window-ledge. "Perhaps I should marry and settle down."

"I wish you would," said Frank, warmly. "At your age a man ought to have a home, if he ever means to have one."

"Just hear the boy talk!" laughed Martin.

"In other words, you think I ought to give up my wild Bohemian ways, and live like a Christian?"

"I don't think it would hurt you," said Frank, with the impudence of youth; then lifting the cloth from his canvas, he added, "It isn't quite finished yet. I am to have a last sitting to-day."

The portrait was a beautiful one. Its subject, a girl of nineteen, perhaps, with glorious yellow hair, and all the intensified charms of blonde loveliness. Martin knew very well that there was only one woman with those full red lips and tawny eyes.

"It is Coral!" he cried, in surprise.

"Yes," Frank answered, coldly. "It is odd she did not speak of it to me."

"I don't think so," said Frank, with a resentful flush. "It is something of a secret, you know."

He felt annoyed by Blake's tone. Martin was intimate with Paul Lemoine he knew, but why should he claim the confidence of Coral?

"You have done admirably," Martin went on. "That slight upward glance of the eye is quite perfect; but you want a little more light in her hair, and Coral's flesh has none of that pink on it. It is dead-white. I never saw such skin as hers."

Frank felt his anger rising. What right had Martin Blake to criticise this work, over which he had laboured so long and lovingly!—this work into which he had put all the tender thoughts and passionate longings of months? And what right had he, a cynical man of the world, who had, only a day previous, at a club dinner, declared his utter disbelief in love or its sweet romances? What right had he to analyse the beauty of Coral Lemoine, as though she were a frivolous model, paid by the hour for posing?

"It is not finished yet," Frank said, hastily, throwing the cloth over the picture again.

"There is a great deal to be done to it yet."

"I can see that. But it will make a mark for you, Welby; you have done nothing better."

The artist was cold and constrained when his friend went away. He did not wish to be so, but he could not shake off a certain chilling influence that seemed to hang over him.

Even when Coral came, he had a dull sense of the change that had suddenly come over him, and the afternoon was not what he hoped it would be.

"You have been so kind to me, Mr. Welby," she said, as she drew on her long, grey gloves, and rose to go. "I almost feel as though you were an old friend, and"—with a soft blush

deepening in her cheeks—"I think I will take you into my confidence. That portrait is for Martin Blake. I am going to marry him, and I want it for a surprise on his birthday."

Frank Welby did not speak or move. He was perfectly cold and white, but he gave no sign that his heart had suddenly been crushed as one blow.

"Did you hear me?" said Coral, looking up in surprise.

"Quite well, mademoiselle. I—I hope you will be very happy."

He leaned back, with a gasp, and Coral sprang forward anxiously.

"What is it? Mr. Welby, you are ill!"

"No, no, it is nothing—only a slight pain. But if you will excuse me to-day—"

"I have kept you too long," she said, contritely, holding out her hands. "You have worked too hard."

"Not at all," Frank replied, barely touching the perfumed finger-tips.

"Good-bye! I shall see you soon again."

She smiled to him with engaging sweetness.

"Good-bye!" Frank said, in a low tone; then he added, in a whisper, "good-bye, my love! My darling, good-bye!"

Twenty years had passed since Frank Welby, a rising young artist of twenty-three, had taken the Academy prize, and gone off to Rome, where he had made his home, and whence he was returning to-day for the first time.

He was walking down the street again in the direction of his old quarters.

Martin Blake had bought the house after his marriage, and, having made some money with his pictures, had built another, now ten years old, on the site of the first structure.

There he lived through the easy-going years of later life, and Frank Welby meant to see him again.

Coral had died after a brief span of years, and Frank felt that he was strong enough to face the old memories now.

"Mr. Blake is not in, sir," the servant said, in reply to his inquiry.

"Can you show me into the studio?" John asked; "and when Mr. Blake comes in give him my card."

How different the room looked from the one he remembered! There was where his sketch-book used to hang, and there was the old cast of the "Venus de Milo," and there her picture had stood on the covered easel.

The floor used to be dirty and rotten; now it was polished and waxed, with bright rugs lying everywhere to set off the rare cabinets, pictures and bric-à-brac.

Frank sank down on a luxurious couch and leaned back so that his head almost touched the alken panel of a rich screen.

"Twenty years ago!" he murmured, softly. "I am getting to be an old man!"

But he did not look that. At forty-three he had grey hair, but his eyes were keen and dark, his face was smooth and rounded, he had that stalwart carriage which defies the gathering years.

He was still a handsome man, and very few people would have looked into the past for his history.

"How few of the promises of my youth have been fulfilled!" he murmured, sadly.

And then he started, for his upward glance had met the eyes of Coral Lemoine, looking down on him from a picture-frame.

"I loved her with my whole soul!" he said, softly, and his eyes rested on the portrait with the tenderness of a long-remembered passion.

His love was not dead yet, but it had turned to stone, and to-day it was merely a silent, monumental witness of his unhappy youth.

He was dreaming half-sadly over the pictured face which had been lost to him so long before death had claimed it. A sweet voice, vibrating gently through the room, aroused him.

"This is Frank Welby, I believe?"

He turned and saw a slight, lovely figure

clash white—a woman with the same pale-yellow hair, the same gloriously-fair face, as looked down at him from the portrait.

"Coral!" he cried, in a hushed tone, "Coral!"

"Yes," she answered, cordially, "I am Coral Blake. The servant has just given me your card. I am very glad to see you. I have often heard my father speak of you, and I have always been a great admirer of your pictures. It was you, was it not, who painted my mother's portrait?"

"You are the daughter of Coral Lemoine," cried Frank, taking the little hand so graciously held out to him.

"Yes;—I am her daughter. Tracy says I am like her, too."

"You are perfectly like her," Frank faltered, "in every way."

"I don't think I can be as pretty as mamma was," she said, laughing; "that is, if your picture is faithful."

"I know your mother very well," was Frank's slow reply, "and I could easily mistake you for her."

They were sitting on the couch by this time, and they drifted soon into a gay conversation. When Martin Blake came home he welcomed most effusively the old friend who had grown so famous all over the world.

Frank was soon at home in the house, and afterwards went there often; for he had few friends now on this side of the water, and he clung to them very fondly.

When the spring came Coral Lemoine "came out," as the phrase goes. She was just nineteen, and fair as an Eastern Lily. It fell to Frank Welby's part to take her to her first ball, as her father was away from home. He called for her in full evening dress, and he looked very handsome as he stood waiting for her under the light of a crystal chandelier. She came down, trailing a lot of white silk and lace after her, and buttoning a long pair of gloves.

"Oh, Mr. Frank," she cried, calling him by the name that had grown most common to him, "I'm so glad you came early! I want to thank you for the lovely bracelet you sent me. It is perfectly beautiful—only I'm afraid I ought not to accept it. It isn't quite proper, is it, for a girl to accept such costly presents from a gentleman, unless—"

She paused, and the brief silence, with its accompanying blush, set Frank's pulses throbbing.

"Ah, if that sweet rose-glow were only meant for him!"

"It cannot matter, Coral," he said, "from such an old man as I."

"Why, you are not old!" she exclaimed, with a swift upward glance. "I am sure you look very young and—and—very handsome."

"Do you think so?" Frank said, taking her hands in his. "I wish I were younger, Coral, for your sake."

"But I would rather not," she said, with eyes shyly downcast. "I like you best as you are. Why, Frank, I like you ever so much better than all of those silly young fellows I used to meet last year at the county balls."

"Do you really, darling?" he said, eagerly; and then he turned very pale, for he had not meant to call her that. "Forgive me, Coral!" he said, hastily. "I did not intend to say that."

"Don't take it back," she said, looking down; "I like it—from you."

The little hands he held were trembling, and a very sweet smile curved the lips he coveted with all the reawakened longing of an ardent soul.

"Coral," he cried, "would it not offend you if an old man like me were to speak to you of love?"

"No," was her soft answer.

"And may I—dare I hope? Oh, Coral! how can I think of such a thing? But—I love you with my whole soul!"

Was it a dream, or did he feel two soft,

warm arms about his neck clinging to him fondly? while a dear voice whispered,—

"I am so glad—so very glad."

After all those long, weary years he had found his way at last to a haven of happiness.

"And would you—oh, my darling—could you give yourself to me—your sweet, young self?" Frank said, after a rapturous pause.

"To you—and no other," she answered, softly.

And Frank knew, as he held her against his heart, that he had found his lost love, and would lose her no more.

S. T.

FACETIÆ.

If consistency is a jewel, why isn't it more fashionable to wear it?

Big heads are a sign of astuteness; a cabbage should be sharper than a pin.

"How do you measure your profits?" asked a friend of a rapidity. "By quartz, of course."

Why does a dog wear more clothes in summer than in winter? In winter he wears a coat, and in summer he wears a coat and pants.

"Fish?" asked the waiter of a country visitor at a seaside hotel. "Well, I dunno," was the reply. "Wait till I get somethin' ter eat, and then I'll talk with yer about goin' fishin'."

CONVERSATION between two friends: "Are you going to the circus this afternoon?" "No, I can't go until to-night. The Rev. Mr. Jackson is going to preach my wife's funeral this afternoon, and it would not look well if I were not present."

PROFESSOR PROCTOR says the earth is still in her youth. That explains why she goes around so much and is out so late at nights.

JOHNNY had been to the house of a neighbour to play with the children. "Well, Johnny," asked his mother, on his return, "did you enjoy yourself?" "Oh, yes, ma; and they are going to have Irish stew for dinner." "Haven't I told you times out of number that you must never repeat what you have heard at people's houses?" "But, ma, I did not hear anything about the stew; I smelled it with my nose."

BAIRD: "I must have your advice, doctor. My husband gets the nightmare nearly every night, and frightens me half to death." Doctor: "You have gone into housekeeping, I suppose?" Bride: "Yes; we just got settled last week." Doctor: "And, I presume, as there are only two in the family, you attend to the housekeeping duties yourself?" "Bride: "Yes." Doctor: "Well, get some one else to do the cooking."

EDITH: "What blunders the papers do make. They say there are no marriageable young men at the watering-places. Why, this resort is full of young men." MA: "The papers are right, my dear." EDITH: "Right! How can they be? But, by-the-way, what is a marriageable young man?" MA: "An only son with a rich pa."

"Will you kindly tell me what is going on in that church?" asked a tramp of a gentleman who had just descended the steps. "They are holding a church fair." "I am very sorry." "Why are you sorry, my friend?" "Well, I was going to ask you to help me, but if you've been in there it ain't no use."

"What seems to be the matter?" he asked, mildly, as they were returning from church. "Didn't you enjoy the sermon?" "Enjoy the sermon!" she repeated, shortly, "and that odious Mrs. Smith sitting directly in front of me with a new winter jacket on that never cost less than twelve pounds! You must think I have a very warm religious temperament."

THE man who has the floor is the man who is learning to ride the bicycle.

SOME young men are so improvident that they cannot keep anything but late hours.

Why is the letter R like the face of Hamlet's father? Because it's more in sorrow than in anger.

INDEFINITE postponement: "I will see you when the statue of Liberty Enlightening the World is erected."

We presume the reason Mercury is represented with wings is because it has to fly around so in the thermometer.

"ASTONISHING, isn't it, how things are taxed?" said Straddles. "Why, I hear lots of people talking about taxing their brains."

What did the donkey do when he first heard of the doctrine of evolution? He brayed until he became a little "hoarse."

DECTOR FULFON related that once during his sermon he exclaimed: "Place me upon the polar iceberg, where no verdure greets the eye, and where naught but the white bear's growl can be heard, when a deep bass voice replied, 'Amen!'"

HE: "No, as you say, Mr. A. is not a very nice-looking man, but he is a man of sound sense, and his conversation is improving." SHE: "His conversation improving? Why, I didn't know there was anything the matter with it."

YOUNG WIFE: "Why, Charlie, what have you gone and bought a dog for?" YOUNG HUSBAND: "Ah—um, my dear, you know we can't eat everything that comes on the table—no family can." YOUNG WIFE: "Oh, Charlie! (crying) I knew you wouldn't like my cooking. Oh, dear, dear!" YOUNG HUSBAND: "There, there! don't cry. I'll sell the dog."

MRS. B.: "Are you not going to celebrate your wooden wedding?" MRS. C.: "No; my first wedding was a wooden one." MRS. B.: "Oh, it could not be, you know." MRS. C.: "It was. I married a blockhead."

"Which part of the cake will you take, Johnny?" "Oh, I'll take the soprano, I think." "The soprano—what do you mean?" "The upper part, of course, ma!"

"Is that your boy, Smith?" "Yes; so you think he takes after me?" "He might have the disposition to do it, but after you'd had a chance there wouldn't be anything left for him to take."

BULLS' EYES.

Yu will discover this to be true: One-half the world are bizzzy all the time contriving how they shall cheat the other half.

Next to money, yu kan travel farther away from home on politeness, and git bar agin, than on enny commodity I hne ov.

We hav all ov us—seen repentance that kon-sisted ov hiding our sins from ourselves and exposing them to our nabors.

A woman is her own best friend, and a man as often his own worst enemy.

Did yu ever see a marriage yet in which more was realized than was anticipated?

Truth is a citizen ov the world, has no pedigree, and is the same in all languages.

Don't think, when yu hav left yure place, that it will remain long unfilled; if yu will but just kast yure eye over yure shoulder now, yu will see a dozen in line waiting for it.

There is nothing easier to draw than the picture ov a ghost, and nothing more difficult to find than a ghost to match the picture.

Yang man, if yu will set down and keep still, somebody may suspect yu ov being wise.

Satan allwuss finds the idle man's gate ajar, and enters without knocking.

Mankind may be divided as follows: Those who kno but little, those who kno less, and those who kno nothing at all.

Yang man, be keffull how yu shoot; one miss will neutralize at least four hits.

I never knu a man yet to ketch a two-pound trout and then be able to guess without a pound and a half ov his actual weight.

Poetry is the harmony ov flesh.

—Jos. Billings.

SOCIETY.

THE Duchess of Albany passed Christmas with the Queen at Osborne. It is Her Royal Highness's present intention to visit her parents, the Prince and Princess Waldeck and Pyrmont, at Arolsen, early in the new year.

PRINCE WILLIAM OF HESSE PHILIPPSTHOL, who was married on the 6th ult., at Lauenlund, near Kiel, to Princess Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Grucksburg, niece of the King of Denmark, has been married three times, and is now fifty-one years old, while his fair bride is forty.

THE Duke and Duchess of Hamilton's infant daughter was christened by the Rev. Teignmouth Shore at Berkeley Chapel with much ceremony, a distinguished company being present. The sponsors were Prince Louis Esterhazy, the Countess of Gosford, and the Hon. Mrs. T. Fitzwilliam, who gave the names of Mary Louise to the infant.

THE Princess Christian, being greatly interested in the Sarah Acland Nurses' Home at Oxford, of which the Duke of Albany was patron, has intimated her willingness to assist the committee in raising the necessary funds for the completion of the purchase of the Home by taking a part in a concert to be given in the Sheldonian Theatre on Jan. 23. The Princess has arranged to play two duets with Mr. Parratt, organist of St. George's, Windsor. Lady Agnes Montagu and the Hon. Mrs. Robert Lytton (Miss Santley) will assist on the same occasion.

NORTHAMPTON HOUSE, Piccadilly, has been purchased from the Northampton family by Mr. Hamar A. Bass, M.P.

MARRIAGES are announced between Sir Henry Grafton Bellow, Bart., 5th Dragoon Guards, and Lady Sophia Forbes, second daughter of the Earl of Granard; also Mr. George Buchanan, youngest son of the late Sir Andrew Buchanan, and Lady Georgina Bathurst, eldest daughter of Earl Bathurst.

LORD EGERTON OF TATTON has presented to Chester Cathedral an antique marble font, which he has brought specially from Italy. Lord Egerton has also undertaken to fill the large southern window with stained glass in memory of his father. This will necessitate the restoration of the entire south front.

THE Queen of Italy presented Donna Maria, daughter of the Duc and Duchesse Massimo, on the occasion of her marriage a few days ago with Don Prospero Colonna, with a valuable brooch of diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, in the shape of a trefoil. The brooch was simply and elegantly attired in a dress of rich white faille, with an extremely long train, a veil of Brussels lace fastened with diamond pins, and a diadem of diamonds. The whole of Roman "Society" was present at the church and banquet.

MR. AND MRS. HOWARD VINCENT have been making a tour through New Zealand, and were entertained at Christchurch by the Mayor during their visit.

A GRAND celebration of St. George's Day took place at the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, in which the Emperor, Empress, and Czaritch (who was in Cossack uniform) took part, as well as the rest of the Royal family and Court dignitaries. The Empress was dressed in white satin, with an upper skirt of gold cloth, trimmed and bordered with sable. The entire Court entered the Great Hall in procession, the Knights of St. George being already assembled. There were two dinners, the first for the under officers, the second at six o'clock for the officers, at both of which the Emperor was present, and drank to the health of the Knights of St. George.

STATISTICS.

HOSPITAL SUNDAY FUND.—The number of congregations contributing during the past year—the twelfth year of collections for the fund—was 1,522, being an increase of 180 over the previous year, and the amount collected £39,329 16s. 6d. This total showed an increase of £894 on the general contributions, in addition to which the year has been marked by a special contribution of £4,500 from his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, as president of the International Health Exhibition.

BRITISH SHIPPING.—The total number of vessels launched at the ports on the North East Coast is 250, and the gross tonnage 236,987, being a decrease of 300,290, as compared with last year. On the Tyne, 124,221 tons were launched; on the Wear, 99,597; at Hartlepool, 30,968; on the Tees, 30,336; at Whitby, 8,803; and at Blyth, 5,067. On the Clyde during the year, 323 vessels, of 299,119 gross tons, were built, being a reduction of 118,762 tons as compared with last year. At Dundee this year 15,926 tons were launched, and at Leith 4,332 tons.

GEMS.

SCIENCE is a first-rate piece of furniture for a man's upper chamber, if he has common sense on the ground-floor. But if a man hasn't got plenty of good common-sense, the more science he has the worse for his patient.

THE memory ought to be a store-room; many turn theirs rather to a lumber-room. Even stores grow mouldy, and spoil, unless aired and used betimes, and then they, too, become lumber.

OF all passions jealousy is that which exacts the hardest service and pays the bitterest wages. Its service is to watch the success of our enemy; its wages to be sure of it.

TO know the pains of power we must go to those who have it; to know its pleasures we must go to those who are seeking it. The pains of power are real, its pleasures imaginary.

THE best general test to which we can submit the question of accepting or declining the proffered help of others will be to discover whether or not it will strengthen our energies to help ourselves. If it will we will do well to take it; if it weakens them and fosters a dependent feeling we will do well to decline.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CABBAGE JELLY.—Boil cabbage in the usual way, and squeeze in a colander till perfectly dry, then chop small; add a little butter, pepper and salt; press the whole very closely into an earthenware dish, and bake one hour. When done turn it out.

BEETS AND CABBAGE.—A palatable and pretty dish is made by baking beets (they are much sweeter than when boiled), and chopping them fine, and mixing with twice the amount of finely chopped cabbage; add sugar, pepper and salt, with sufficient amount of vinegar heated and thrown over the mixture. It will keep for some time if covered tightly in an earthen jar.

CABBAGE EQUAL TO CAMELFLOWER.—Remove the outer leaves from a small-sized head of cabbage, and cut the remainder into fine shreds. Have on the fire a spider or deep skillet, and when it is hot put on the cut cabbage, pouring over it about a pint of boiling water, cover it closely, and allow it to cook rapidly for about ten minutes; drain off the water, and add half a pint of new milk, or part milk and cream; when it boils, stir in a large teaspoonful of either wheat or rice flour; moisten with a little cold milk; add salt and pepper, and as soon as it comes to a boil serve.

MISCELLANEOUS EDITOR.

AS clever dogs are being discussed at the present time, we now hear of a hard-working canine in Boston, U.S.A., who, the *Live Stock Journal* tells us, earns a fair salary and supports a family, by playing nightly in a sensational drama, entitled *Rag-Baby*, at a Boston Theatre.

A GRAND monetary bonfire will shortly take place in Rome. The bank-notes withdrawn from circulation in accordance with the law suppressing the forced currency of paper-money will be formally burnt in a specially erected furnace, when paper once worth nearly three millions sterling will vanish into smoke.

CIVIL BAPTISMS have now succeeded civil weddings and civil funerals across the Channel. The mayor performs the ceremony, and the infant wears a tricolour sash, while the christening sweetmeats usually distributed on such occasions are given away to the poor children belonging to the lay schools. No Church scholars need apply.

CREMATION advocates have managed to get in the thin end of the wedge in France. Hitherto the Cremation Society has striven vainly for four years to obtain permission for a furnace, and now the Paris authorities have consented to build a crematory on the Italian system to consume the unclaimed dead in the hospitals and the remains of those subjected to dissection.

A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT'S FIRST RIDE ON A CAMEL.—The *Daily Telegraph* Dongola correspondent writes:—"A few days ago I had my first ride on a camel, and I thought it would have been my last. It was to go to our camp that I got cross-legged upon an Arab saddle, insecurely fastened by stirrups upon the back of a great lumbering, hump-backed brute. I no sooner attempted to take my place on the saddle than the camel, which was lying prone, into which position he had been forced, began grunting like an old village pump violently worked. At the same time he turned his prehensile lips aside, grinned like a bull-dog, and showed a grinning row of teeth, which he sought to close upon me. I got aboard without accident, and had not long to wait for a rise. The first movement, as he lifted his fore-legs, nearly sent me over backwards; the next, as he straightened his hind legs, still more nearly tipped me over his head. I had been warned to hold tight, but it was only the clutch of desperation that saved me. After several lunges and plunges, the brute got fairly on his legs. The reins consisted of a rope round his neck for steering, and a string fastened to a ring thrust in his nostrils, to pull up his head and stop him when going too fast. My camel began to move forward, and thereupon I oscillated and saw-sawed as if seized with seasickness or cramp in the stomach. Involuntary as the movement was, an hour of it would, I am sure, have made as abject a victim of me as the worst sufferer on a Channel passage. A heartless friend was in front of me on another camel, which he set trotting. Instantly I became as helpless as a child; for my camel disregarded the strain on his nostrils and my fervent ejaculations. My profane Arabic vocabulary was too limited to have the slightest effect. I swayed to and fro, was bumped up and down, until I was almost shaken to pieces. It would have been a positive relief could I have found myself at rest on the ground, but the motion was so incessant I had not time to make up my mind what course to adopt. It ended as even experiences of the worst kind must do, and I found myself still on the camel's back. Not so my humorous friend, who, to my great comfort, performed a double somersault, and did not succeed in landing quite on his feet. I was told I should become accustomed to camel-riding, and might even get to like it. But my faith is not great enough for that."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. M. C.—We have been unable to find anyone who can translate the so-called Scottish sentence.

B. M.—We have no personal knowledge of the instruments referred to, and therefore cannot vouch for their usefulness. Test them before you purchase them.

L. C. L.—1. Day garments should always be discarded and night habiliments substituted. 2. The duty devolves upon the host.

S. G. W.—1. It would be better to break the engagement than to offend your parents. 2. A little more practice will make you a good copyist.

D. R. F.—A purchaser for the curiosity might be found in some of the large towns, but we cannot state what amount of money would be paid for it.

LUKE W.—1. A cubic foot of silver weighs 553 lbs.; a cubic foot of water 62 lbs. 2. A "hand," as applied to the measurement of a horse, is four inches.

L. C.—Not knowing the nature of your troubles we cannot help you. Perhaps it is the cause of your lover's coolness, no other reason being apparent, according to the statement of the case as given in your letter.

P. G.—Papyrography is a method of printing from a kind of pasteboard covered with a calcareous substance, in precisely the same manner as from the stone in lithographic writing.

B. [W. C.—We never answer questions of a mathematical nature, as they are not of general interest to our readers. The solution of the problem you send will serve to while away some of your leisure hours during the winter evenings.

E. N.—In the southern portions of Ireland the longest day lasts twenty hours, the shortest four hours. In the northern districts the sun never sets for a whole week in midsummer, and in midwinter never rises above the horizon during an equally long period of time.

F. T.—No; it is decidedly improper for an unmarried or married gentleman friend to correspond with a married lady, even though her husband reads the letters. Married happiness can only be maintained by exercising circumspection in all your actions.

E. Y. C.—1. The engagement ring in this country is generally worn on the third finger of the right hand. 2. It is not necessary to have any inscription upon it; but if you desire it, the initials of the parties to the engagement may be used, with the date, &c.

A. G. K.—Most kinds of indelible ink stains may be removed by the application of a strong solution of cyanide of potassium, and rinsing well. The cyanide is a deadly poison, and must be handled with the most scrupulous care. Pumice-stone or sand-soap will remove ink stains from the hands.

MIDWINTER.—It will be necessary to obtain a divorce from your second husband in order to legally remarry the first partner of your joys and sorrows, from whom you have already been divorced. If the second one interferes with you, or attempts to do you bodily harm, an appeal to the law will be necessary.

M. C.—Moscow, a city of European Russia, is the city referred to. In 1812 nearly the greater portion of it was consumed by the great fire, ordered by the Russian Government, to prevent the French army from occupying it as their winter quarters. It was subsequently rebuilt and greatly improved.

D. D. C.—Herodotus has been rightly called the father of ancient history; and to him we are indebted for the first work really deserving that title. He was born at Halicarnassus, 484 B.C. His "Histories" chiefly depicts the early struggles of the Greeks, but contains epical narratives of the Persians, Medes, Egyptians, and other peoples.

E. R. N.—1. The head of the Saviour is exhibited in paintings and sculptures with a "glory" or circle of rays to express the conviction of Christianity that He is the Light of the spiritual world, in the same way that the sun is the central light of the lower creation. 2. St. Paul is represented as a man of low stature, and inclining to stoop, of a grave countenance, and a fair complexion.

C. C.—The reticence of your lady friend is doubtless natural, and not assumed, as you appear to think. When you become better acquainted, she will doubtless be more affectionate and easy in her manners. From the description given of both parties we are inclined to believe that the match will prove a happy one, but quiet nature acting as a safety valve to your overbearing spirits.

P. S. N.—1. Questions concerning political subjects are never answered through this column. The one you ask has been satisfactorily answered in the daily papers of late date. 2. Pronounce the name as though it were spelled *Eye-un-see*, placing the accent on the first syllable. 3. Place the cedar slip in rich earth, keep it well watered, and give it as much light and sun as possible. It should not be exposed to the cold. 4. Excellent writing.

SUFFERER.—For ingrowing toe-nails apply to the tender part a very small quantity of perchloride of iron, which is purchased usually in a fluid form. A sensation of pain, constriction, or burning will follow, but in a few minutes it will cease, and the hitherto sensitive surface will be felt to be dried up, leaving a hardened, wood-like flesh, which in two or three weeks can be easily removed by soaking the foot in warm water. In future wear shoes a little too long.

O. R. N.—Metallography is an account of metals, or a treatise on metallic substances; and metallochromy is the art or process of colouring metals. We have no knowledge of any instrument such as you name.

MRS. B.—Your letter is well enough written, but we do not think the gentleman to whom it is addressed will derive much satisfaction from it. There will be, however, no actual impropriety in sending it. Do as you think best.

CLAUDIAN.—The word photography comes from the Greek *phos*, light, and *grapho*, I write. You will find full and accurate information, lucidly given, in any of the journals devoted to the art, which a newsagent will readily procure for you.

J. W. G.—When troubled with wakefulness, observe these rules:—Eat nothing very hearty after sunset, go to bed with a calm mind, at a regular hour, and when you awake rise and dress at once, no matter how early it is; never sleep during the day, and above all do not allow your mind to dwell on the fact of being unable to sleep. If this course does not bring about the desired result, consult a physician at once, as loss of rest tends to cause other serious derangements of the human system.

M. T. P.—1. There would be no impropriety in a younger sister writing to the gentleman, informing him of the marriage, and requesting the return of the photograph and other presents. 2. Familiarity is not always to be allowed, even among intimate friends. You should admonish him not to repeat the affront. 3. A husband should be called by his Christian name. 4. If very intimate, the same. 5 and 6. Yes, if the visit is expected to be a lengthy one. 7. We should advise a strict avoidance of the subject. 8. Yes.

WINTER THOUGHTS.

On his gleaming, frosted throne
Winter reigns with potent sway,
And his mandates earth and air
All submissively obey.
But my happy heart doth not
Recognise this mighty power,
For 'tis warm and fresh as in
Summer's most delightful hour.

Bare and bleak the woodland glade
Shivers in the frosty air;
Vanished is its fragrant breath,
Withered are its blossoms fair.
But what need have I to seek
Odours from the blossoming grove,
When my life is sweetly blessed
With my darling's tender love?

All the woods are silent now,
Wrapped in spectral robes of rime,
And the warblers, too, have flown,
Seeking for a warmer clime.
But I scarcely miss their songs,
Rippling from each bush and tree,
For the days are musical
With her voice's melody.

Wintry days are not to me
Dark and drear with chill and gloom,
But the hours softly glide,
Sweet and bright with love's perfume.
Oh, when years have decked our brows
With a crown of silvery rime,
May our lives by love be made
Fair as bloom of summer-time!

—K. C.

B. J. J.—1. Not after she is twenty-one years of age. 2. If the threats are made in the presence of witnesses, the parties can be held to bail for good behaviour. 3. The road is a public highway, and any one has a right to pass over it. 4. Persons with slanderous tongues can be prosecuted for defamation of character. 5. It is a misdemeanour, and the penalty is a fine or imprisonment, or both. 6. She might recover damages, but the amount would be very small.

S. B. R.—The bride and bridegroom take their places immediately in front of the altar (if married in a church), the bride on the left. The bridesmaids either group themselves behind her, or stand on one side. The groomsmen maintain a like relative position with the bridegroom. The bride takes off the glove of her left hand and gives it to the first bridesmaid to hold, in order that she may have the wedding-ring placed upon her finger. The groom removes the glove from his right hand for the purpose of bestowing the ring.

L. N.—1. A lady of very fair, delicate complexion should always wear the most delicate of tints, such as light blue, mauve and pea-green. A brunette requires bright, warm colours, such as scarlet and orange, to bring out the brilliant hues of her complexion. A florid face and auburn hair—such as we judge yours to be—calls for blue. 2. Light brown hair requires blue, which sets off to advantage the golden tint. Black hair has its depth and colour enhanced by scarlet, orange or white, while dark-brown will bear light blue, or a small amount of dark blue.

AILEEN.—For Rubber Stamp Ink, mix one drachm of the proper aniline colour with one and a half ounces of alcohol in a glass or enamelled vessel, and let stand for three or four hours. Then add thirteen ounces of distilled water, and subject the whole to a gentle heat until the alcohol has evaporated; that is, until no odour of alcohol is perceptible, then add five drachms of gum-arabic dissolved in two ounces of water. Mix

and strain. As the aniline colours of commerce vary a great deal in quality, the amount of dilution must vary with the sample used, and the shade be determined by trial. If inexperienced in the work, you will find it cheaper to buy the inks at a stationer's.

N. S. A.—When a young gentleman makes a declaration of love to a lady, he does it with the idea that, should his suit be favourably received, he will become her affianced. It is not necessary, however, that they shall be immediately married; but, having been drawn together by an engagement, they are at liberty to make whatever arrangements they choose concerning the date of the marriage. Obviously it is not proper for a man to tell his love to the woman of his choice unless he intends to become engaged to her, should she return that love.

L. H. B.—1. Wash your hands with fine soap, and before removing the latter scrub the hands with a tablespoonful of Indian meal, rinsing thoroughly with lukewarm water; wipe the hands perfectly dry, then rinse them in a very little water containing a teaspoonful of pure glycerine, rubbing the hands together until the water has evaporated. Be sure to use the purest quality of glycerine. This will prove a preventative and cure for chapped hands. 2. As the darkness of your complexion is natural, we can recommend no remedy for making it clearer. 3. As a general rule, they are worn long.

BEATRICE.—1. A young lady possessed of the charms described would melt the heart of the most pronounced woman-hater in the world. 2. The name of the publisher and proprietor of the paper is given on the first page. He feels highly complimented by your kind remarks and good wishes. 3. Write these lines in Celeste's album:—

"Chains forged by charms like thine wear long,
Endure the strain and grow more strong;
Links forged by wit and sense like thine
Endure the more and brightly shine;
Still let thy sense of this incline
To no ill way to show thy power—
Knobbed heart is beauty's richest dower."

4. Very excellent penmanship and first-class composition.

R. J.—1. Make your home pleasant and cheery for your husband, and if he is as good a man as stated, he will have no inclination to seek pleasure in taverns and intoxicating drinks. 2. The colour having been drawn out of the curtains by the action of rain-water can only be restored by dyeing. 3. Grey hairs form a crown of glory to one situated as you are. Your children, husband, and friends, will love you none the less because the silver has commenced to sprinkle the gold. Hair-dyes should be avoided under every circumstance, as they tend to destroy the beauty of the hair to which they are applied.

T. R. D.—1. Halfay, Halfat, Halfals, or Halfayeh, is a town of Nubia, on the east bank of the Nile, fifteen miles north of Khartoum. Wady is an Arabic term, signifying "valley" or "river." It forms a part of many names in Northern Africa and Western Asia. Khartoum, which is also spelled Khartoum, Khartoom, or Khartum, is the capital of the Egyptian general government of Soudan. It is situated at the junction of the Blue and White Nile, and has a population of about 50,000. 2. From all appearances General Gordon is fully able to take care of himself. You can keep posted concerning his movements as far as known by consulting the daily papers.

T. N. L.—1. It is not probable that any of the stories in the preceding volumes will be republished. If, however, they should appear again, due notice will be given of the fact. 2. The Italian stanza, when translated, reads thus:—

"Beautiful Italy, beloved strand,
I ever turn to see thee;
The roughness of the crust confound
The soul, by pleasure near."

The lines cannot be rendered in any plainer English, on account of the idiomatic manner in which the Italian language is spoken and written.

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††† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

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